

22458.6.3

SEVERAL DISCOURSES

Concerning the
Terms of Acceptance

WITH
G O D.

IN WHICH

- I. The Terms themselves are distinctly laid down;
as they are proposed to Christians in the New
Testament. And
- II. Several false Notions of the Conditions of Sal-
vation are considered.

PARTICULARLY

Of being saved by Faith.	Of Repentance.
Of trusting to External Perfor- mances.	Of the Example of the Thief on the Cross.
Of the Power of Charity to cover Sins.	Of trusting to a Death-bed Sor- row.
Of relying upon the Merits of Christ.	Of the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard.
Of Man's Weakness, and God's Grace.	Of depending upon Amendment in time to come.

By BENJAMIN HOADLY, M. A. Rector of St.
Peter's Poor (now Lord Bishop of *Winchester*.)

The FOURTH EDITION.

L O N D O N :

Printed for JAMES, JOHN, and PAUL Knapton, at the
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DISCOLLERS

Terms of Acceptance

WITH

G O D.



Highly

valuable

and

By BENJAMIN DICKINSON, Esq. of Birmingham.

The Hon. Secy. to the Admiralty.

LONDON.

Printed by James Long, and John K. & Co. Stationers, 10, Abchurch Lane, London.

TO THE
HONoured
Mrs. *HOWLAND*,
OF
STREATHAM in SURRY,

These SERMONS (as a Publick Testimony of the Sincerest GRATITUDE and Highest RESPECT,) are most humbly Dedicated

By Her most obliged

A N D

most obedient Servant,

BENJ. HOADLY.

TO THE

HONORABLE

Mrs. HOWLAND

OF

ST. MARTIN'S STREET

These Sermons (as a Publick Testimony of the Gratitude and

most humble Dedication

By Her most obliged

most obedient Servant,

Benj. Hoadly



THE
PREFACE

TO THE
PARISHIONERS

OF
St. Peter's Poor, London.



*THE following Sermons
were first Framed, and
then Preached, with a
sincere Design of fixing in
your Minds such Notions of Religion,*

The P R E F A C E.

and of the Terms of Salvation, as might be the Foundation of a regular Course of Holiness here, and of an eternal State of Happiness hereafter. And they are now Published, in order to carry forward more extensively the same good End.

It hath been long my Opinion, that the Bad Lives of Christians are not owing so much to their Ignorance of what is truly Evil, and Sinful, as to a certain secret Hope of God's Favour, built upon something separated from the constant Practise of all that is Virtuous and Praiseworthy. This made me chuse to spend some time in establishing, after the most unexceptionable manner, the true Grounds upon which only it is reasonable to build our Expectations of

The P R E F A C E.

of Happiness; and in demonstrating the great Danger and Weakness of depending on any other Methods. My chief Study hath been to do this, not only by the most convincing Arguments, but with the greatest Plainness of Expression: having had no other View, either in the Choice, or Prosecution, of this Design, but that of being useful, in a Matter of the highest Importance. And if these Sermons shall, through God's Blessing, either awaken, or confirm, in any Christians, a true Sense of Religion, and of the great Design of Christianity; I shall have a Satisfaction within, hardly to be expressed in Words.

I have made them of such a Length, that any one of them may

THE PREFACE.

be read, either in the Family, or the Closet, within the compass of half an Hour. And because they will most probably, as they are designed, be read, every one, singly in it's Order; I have therefore endeavoured rather to make, than to avoid, the Repetition of such things, as either are of so great importance, as to be equally Necessary on several Occasions; or serve to make every Discourse, by it self, the more complete and useful.

I am very sensible of the Obligations I lie under, to contribute my utmost towards your right Understanding, and conscientious Practice, of true Religion. It hath pleased God, by a particular Providence, to make my Power to serve you
much

THE PREFACE.

much less than my Will : nor am I insensible of my many Imperfections in the discharge of those parts of my Office which I am still able to perform. But of this you your selves are Witnesses ; (and these Sermons will be some Testimony of it to the World ;) that the Points which I have chiefly, I may say constantly, inculcated upon you from the Pulpit, have been the great, undisputed, Duties of the Gospel, and the indispensable Necessity of an Holy Life. You see, I would willingly find out something that might atone a little for my Defects in other parts of my Office : and I can think of nothing better than this, that I have carefully endeavoured to point out to you the true way to Heaven. Nor can I possibly

The P R E F A C E.

possibly give you a greater Demonstration than this, how truly I desire your Happiness; and how sincerely I am

Your Faithful Friend,

and Servant,

BENJ. HOADLY.

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250.

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Concerning



Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

SERMON I.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th Verse.

Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal Life ?



HIS is the Enquiry of one SERM.
of the Students and Interpre- I.
ters of the *Law* of *Moses* :
who, hearing of our Lord's
Behaviour, and Pretensions to
so great a Character as that of the *Messiah*
sent by God to instruct Mankind in the
right way to Happiness, came, amongst o-
thers, either out of Curiosity, or some worse
Principle, to try what Answer he would
give to so important a Question as this in
the Text, *What shall I do to inherit eter-*
nal Life ? i. e. What are the great points
B of

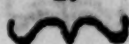
SERM. of Practice, which can recommend me,
I. who am a *Jew*, and adhere to the *Law* of
Moses, to the Favour of God? For by our
Lord's Answer it is plain, that this *Question*
related to the chief practical Duties of
Religion; and that it was not our Lord's
Design to give the *Enquirer* a particular
Account of the Conditions of Justification,
and Terms of Acceptance, which *He*, and
his *Apostles*, were in due time to lay open
to the World. He appeals, We see, to the
Enquirer himself, what the great Precepts
of the *Law* were; and afterwards declares
that an exact observance of those two com-
prehensive Duties, of loving God, and our
Neighbour, would entitle him to *eternal*
Life: Duties, so comprehensive indeed,
that to them may be reduced all that is good
in any Religion in the World, and all that
can possibly render us acceptable to God.
But though this summary Declaration an-
swered well our blessed Lord's Purpose at
that time, as it was a sufficient Reply to
the present *Enquirer*: yet it was the great
business of his Divine Mission to enter more
particularly into this *grand Debate*; to
promulgate to the World more expressly,
and

and more fully, those *Terms* and *Conditions*, S E R M.
I.
upon which Almighty God, for the sake of
what he undertook to do and suffer in this
World, will accept Mankind, and make
those happy, who cannot pretend to a sin-
less and perfect Obedience to his Laws, but
stand conscious to themselves of many past
Transgressions of them. Since therefore,
this was the professed business of *Him*, in
whom we believe : it becomes us all, if we
have any thoughts of Happiness, to address
our selves to the same Person, with a very
serious Curiosity ; and to enquire what it is
that is expected at our Hands, in order to
our Justification, and final Acquittance
from the guilt of our Sins, at the great
Day. This is the *Enquiry* which is of the
utmost importance to us.

BUT it will be proper here to observe,
that, with respect to such as have been edu-
cated in any other false *Religion*, or *Wor-
ship*, and have contracted the guilt of ma-
ny Sins, the first part of the *Enquiry*, and
of the *Answer* to it, will be somewhat dif-
ferent from what it must be, with respect to
such as have been educated in the knowledge
and belief of *Christianity*, and taken the
B 2 Profession

S E R M. Profession of it upon themselves ; and after that contracted the guilt of wilful Sins :
 I. as may appear to any who seriously consult the *New Testament*. For the *first Enquiry* there made by such as were at any time touched to the Heart, and uneasy under the consciousness of their former Sins, was, how they should be saved from this guilt which they had already contracted ; or what they should do to be acquitted from these Sins committed in their former State. And the *Answer* we find was, that their receiving Christ for their Master ; their first Faith, and believing in him, should have that Efficacy with Almighty God, that all their past Sins, committed before this *Faith*, should be cancelled ; and *they* looked upon as just persons, with respect to all that was past.

THIS matter of the *Heathen* and *Jewish* World being justified, or acquitted from all past guilt, by their *Faith*, or belief in Jesus Christ, having been strenuously asserted, and fully expressed by the *Apostles*, and especially *St. Paul* ; many weak and unstable Men have built such Notions upon this, as have been, and may be, of pernicious consequence



consequence to *Christians*, under the Gospel-State, and after they have receiv'd and professed this *Faith* in *Christ*: arguing as if a strong *Faith* or *Confidence* in *Jesus Christ*, and his Merits, would do all; acquit from all Sins; and render the wicked Christian spotless at last; and present him blameless before the Throne of God. Whereas it is manifest that, after this *first Justification*, and acquittance, was obtained by means of believing in *Jesus Christ*; this very believing, or *Faith*, brought the Believer under the most strict Obligations imaginable; more in Number, and severer in their Nature, than the Man was under before; and these bound upon him under the penalty of God's eternal Displeasure. This is as plain in the *New Testament*, as Words can make it. But of this *Justification* which professed *Christians* expect at any time to be wrought for them by *Faith*, or *Confidence* only, I shall have occasion to speak more in the farther prosecution of my present Design. At present I will only observe to you, that when it is enquired in the *New Testament*, *what shall we do to be saved?* and when it is answered to

SERM. the *Enquirers*, or laid down, that *to believe* and *to be baptized*, or that *Faith* will save them, or the like ; it is only meant, that they who do not believe already shall be acquitted from their past Sins, or saved from the Guilt of them, by believing, and coming into the *Terms* required by the *Gospel* ; or that the first step to their Salvation, and that which will put them into a safe way, is *Faith*, or taking *Christ* for their Master, and being entered into his Religion. Or else, *Faith* is taken for the whole *Gospel-method* ; for the whole of what is required in *that* : and so, it is the intent of these Expressions to signifie that it is this method which only can save them ; not the *Law* of *Moses*, or the Institutions of the *Heathen* World, in which they had before been educated. And it is plain that all this related to such only as had not before professed, or taken upon themselves, the belief of the *Gospel* ; and toucheth not the *Case* in which we are concerned, who have been educated in this belief, or long professed it. *Christians* of later Ages are generally of this sort : and it is their own case and condition, not that of others,
about

about which their *Enquiry* ought to be ; S E R M.
and which it concerns the *Ministers* of the I.
Gospel principally to consider. 

T H I S is my Design ; and what I propose to do as fully as I can : as well by laying down *positively* what is the true answer to this *Enquiry* ; as by considering and refuting those false *Answers* which Men have framed to themselves, from their own vain Wishes, fortified with some mistaken and misapplied Passages in the Word of God. But, before I come to the main Design, it is very expedient,

I. To propose distinctly what the great *Question*, and *Enquiry* is, which concerns *Us*, who have taken upon our selves the profession of the *Christian Religion* ; and continue in that Profession : that so the *Answer* to it may be the better understood.

II. To consider the great importance of this *Enquiry* ; and the hazard of mistaking in it : that we may be the more solicitous to find out the only true account of this matter ; and the more guarded against any Deceit and Delusion in a business of such moment.

SER M. III. To shew the only method of coming to a true Resolution of this *Question*; and where it is that we may expect such an account of this Affair, as we may safely, and securely, depend upon. Now,

I. THE great *Enquiry*, in which we are concerned, is this, What it is that the *Gospel* requires of Men, who believe in Jesus Christ, and profess his *Faith*, and own him for their *Master*; in order to their acquittance from the punishment of any wilful Sins, which they have at any time committed, during their profession of his Religion; and to their final Justification before God at the Day of Judgment; and to their eternal Happiness after this.

That many *Christians* do fall into great and wilful Sins after their *Baptism*; after their knowledge of the Truth; and after they have taken upon themselves the profession of their most holy Religion; is matter of daily Observation, and of daily Experience. That the very best have not, in every part of their past Lives, done exactly what they know they ought to have done; that, in some past Instances or other, of Thought, Word, or Deed, they have had
experience

experience of some sudden Passion, or some SER M.
 latent Weakness, which, by a greater de- I.
 gree of constant Watchfulness, might have
 been prevented; is likewise evident: and
 by themselves always made matter of Con-
 fession and Humiliation. That there is a
 method of Reconciliation proposed in the
Gospel to both these sorts of *Christians*;
 and *Terms* laid down in it, on which
Christian Sinners, if I may so speak, shall
 be accepted and acquitted, is plain from
 many Exhortations in the *New Testament*
 to such *Christians* as had sinned; and from
 the Behaviour of the *Apostles* with respect to
 such; as well as from the Absurdities fol-
 lowing from the contrary Supposition:
 which would render the *Gospel* a most in-
 effectual Institution, debarring every indi-
 vidual professor of it, upon one single, sud-
 den, wilful Transgression, from all future
 Hopes of Happiness; (and *who then can be*
saved?) or a most pernicious Institution,
 turning every *Christian* into a desperate Sin-
 ner, by allowing no Hopes of any benefit
 from his recovering himself.

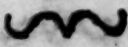
BUT whatever *Terms*, or *Conditions* are
 allowed us, after relapse into Sin, or con-
 tinuance

SERM. continuance in it, we know they are granted,
 I. for the sake of *Jesus Christ*; in consideration of what he did and suffered for this very purpose, that these *Terms* and *Conditions* might be granted to *Christians*. This therefore, I say, is the *Question* about which our greatest Concern is to be employed, What those *Terms* and *Conditions* are, on which, for the sake of *Jesus Christ*, God will acquit us of our Sins, and at last make us eternally happy. For tho' it be for the sake of *Christ*, that he will do this at all; yet he expects something at our own Hands: And it is upon such and such *Conditions* only, that for *his sake* He will accept us; without the performance of which He leaves us no room to hope for any Benefit from the Merits of *Christ*. All that *Christ* has done, and suffered, for our sakes, was only in order to the settling these *Conditions*: but what We are to do, according to this *Treaty* and *Compact*, in which he is the *Mediator*; This belongs to us chiefly to enquire after.

II. The importance of this *Enquiry* plainly appears from the account of it, which I have now given. Our acceptance with
 God;

of Acceptance.

II

God ; our Justification ; our acquittance SERM.
from the guilt of our Sins ; our final and I.
eternal Happiness, depend entirely upon our 
due Apprehensions, and effectual Sense, of
this matter. If we employ our Minds se-
riously about it ; and come to settle in
them true Notions, and a just account of it:
it will be the Fountain of all Happiness to
us ; by being the Foundation of such a Pra-
ctice, and such a Conduct of our Lives, as
will end in Glory, and Peace for ever. And
the importance of it is enlarged, and height-
en'd, when we consider the vast and un-
speakable Danger of mistaking in this *grand*
Enquiry ; that if we do, through Prejudice,
or Passion, or love to this World, or fond-
ness for carnal Pleasure, entertain wrong
Notions of this Affair, they will lead us
into a wrong method of Action, and con-
clude us at last under inexpressible Misery :
the Misery, not only of deprivation, or
being debarred from the Happiness of Hea-
ven, and the Communications of God's Fa-
vour ; but that of enduring positive Tor-
ments, the Wrath of God, and the Punish-
ments threatned by his *Son* in the *Gospel*.
The Consideration of this made our Lord
so

SERM. so earnest to free the Minds of Men from
 I. all false Surmises about the great business
 upon which he came into the World ; that
 neither *Unbelievers*, nor *Believers*, might
 mistake his Errand. The consideration of
 this made the *Apostles*, and particularly
St. Paul, so frequent in their Warnings a-
 gainst all Inclination to be *deceived* in this
 matter : well knowing that *Christians*, e-
 ven in those first Days, were in great dan-
 ger, from the inward Motions of their own
 Lusts and Passions, and the outward Hard-
 ships of *Persecution*, to be misled by such
 false *Apostles*, and false *Teachers*, as would
 sooth their present Inclinations, and flatter
 them into vain and delusive Hopes.

LET not therefore any thing either with-
 in us, or without us ; let not any thing of
 this World ; (Profit, or Honour, or Plea-
 sure,) lay a Bias upon our Minds in this
Enquiry. Neither Profit, nor Honour, nor
 Pleasure can, in the least avail us, when we
 have made the fatal mistake : nor can any
 present Gratification countervail the loss of
 all Happiness to all Eternity. What there-
 fore can induce us to be so careless, or so
 weak, as to be willingly imposed upon in
 a *Questi-*

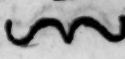
Question, upon the just Resolution of SERM.
 which *Eternity* depends ; and the false ac- I.
 count of which, once permitted to enter
 into our Minds, must draw after it more
 Misery, and Unhappiness than we can now
 conceive ? Since therefore it is an Enquiry
 of such vast, and unspeakable importance ;
 let us

III. Consider the true Method of coming
 to a Resolution of this *grand Question* ;
 and where it is that we may expect such an
 Account of this Affair, as we may safely
 and securely depend upon. Now it being
 a Matter of infinite Grace and Mercy that
 Almighty God will enter into any *Treaty* at
 all with a sinful World ; or come to any
Terms with his rebellious Subjects : it is ve-
 ry evident that the Persons immediately
 commission'd by him, or by the *Person*
 whom he sent into this World upon so good
 an Account, are those only, on whom we
 can safely and with Honour rely in this Af-
 fair. It depended on his Will, to make the
Conditions what he should think agreeable
 to his own unalterable Perfections, and to
 the eternal and unvariable Nature of Just
 and Right. To promulgate these Condi-
 tions,

SERMONS, and to give an Account of these

I. *Terms*, He sent *Jesus Christ* into the World: who in his Life-time did it, as fully as was requisite to his present Design; and, for the same End, immediately commission'd his *Apostles* to preach the glad Tidings to the whole World, and to lay open more fully these Terms; and conducted them by an infallible Spirit, to secure them from all Error in this Matter. Whither then should we go but to him: for *he hath the Words of Eternal Life?* and to his *Apostles*: for they were the *immediate Embassadors* of Christ, *beseeking us to be reconcil'd to God*, and preaching the *Conditions* of this Reconciliation? It is in the *Preachings* of Christ himself, and in the Writings of these *Apostles*, that we can securely hope to find the only Account of this Enquiry that will avail us any thing.

As for our selves, and all others, who succeed in teaching, and feeding the Flock of *Christ*; we cannot pretend to any *new Revelations*. It is our Business only to explain the *old*; to convince Men of any Errors disagreeable to the written Word of God; and to lay before them, in the best manner

manner possible, what is contained, and S E R M.
 propos'd in it. We cannot make the *Terms* I.
of Salvation what we, or many others, may 
 wish. They are fix'd by those who only had
 Authority to fix them, from God, and his
 Holy Spirit: and we must not vary from
 those who have declar'd long ago the whole
 Will of God. Other *Churches* may pre-
 tend to be themselves, (consider'd distinctly
 from the *Apostles* and their Doctrine,) the
Ground and Pillar of Truth; and not on-
 ly the Keepers, and Guardians of the *lively*
Oracles of God: but our Church declareth
 the contrary, and professeth to be only the
Medium, and Interpreter, by which the
 Will of God already settled may be made
 known to the People; and openly proclaims
 that the *Articles and Terms of Salvation*
 are long ago fix'd and determin'd, in such
 sort, that it is an invading the Province of
 God himself to pretend to make new ones,
 or to alter them into what they were not,
 at the Beginning of the *Gospel*. Let that
Unchristian Church, therefore, answer for it,
 that debars the People from consulting those
 Books which alone are able to *make them*
wise unto Salvation; and imposeth upon
 them

SERMON. them Traditions and Customs, and Doctrines of her own, which make void the Will of God, and render ineffectual all his gracious Offers of Salvation to the World; that hides the true Word of God from all Communication with the Light; and teacheth those who depend upon her, to seek Salvation, and to learn the *Terms* of it, from such as impose what they please instead of them. But let any *Church* upon Earth, or any *Ministers* of the *Gospel*, pretend to what they please: whether they speak Truth or Falshood; whether they lighten or increase the burthen of these *Conditions*, or fix them where they ought to be; the *New Testament* is the Standard to which all must be brought to be tried; and by which it is the Duty of all to examine, whether they be truly directed, or invited aside into paths of Darkness and Error.

THE great Lines of the *Gospel*, and those parts of it which declare the Terms of Salvation, have no obscurity in them, but lie level to all who have capacity to understand what *God*, and *Salvation*, and *Happiness*, mean. It will not therefore, in this grand Affair, be a sufficient Apology for any,

at

at the great Day of Accounts, to say that S E R M.
they followed their *Leaders*; that they de- I.
pended upon their Doctrine; and swallow- ~
ed whatever they told them about the Will
of God: because the *New Testament* hath
been transmitted down for their Use; to
teach all Christians what is their Duty, as
well as to guide others in their Doctrine
concerning it. The greatest part of it was
preached, and written, to the *Laity*: from
whence it appears, That they were thought
Judges of what so much concerned them;
and that it was their business to take their
Notions of the *Gospel*, from Those who
were immediately sent by God, and Christ,
to propose it to the World. The utmost
that can be said for depending on any other,
since that time, is, that it is probable, or to
be hoped, that they will not deceive or mis-
lead us. But how weak an Excuse will this
prove, when we know that our *Eternity* de-
pends upon it; that there are Writings which
cannot deceive us; and that, if we seriously
and constantly advise with them, no human
Error, which doth not arise from any wilful
Crime in our selves, shall be charged upon us?
Could you not have consulted these Scrip-
C tures,

S E R M. tures, and seen whether these things were
 I. so, as your *Church*, or your *Leaders*, taught
 you? will be a very sufficient *Reply* to all
 who think to find Refuge, at last, in depending upon any other Authority in so weighty a matter. And were it not out of regard to some secular or By-end; from want of Desire to know the Truth, or an affected unwillingness to alter the accustomed methods of Action: no one could be so senseless as to depend upon the Word of any *modern Authority*; when it was in his Power to go himself to the *original Covenant*. No Man acts in this manner, in the Case of his worldly Concerns; or in any Point which may affect his *Body*, or his *Estate*, in this transitory World: and this will serve to condemn All who are guilty of so great a neglect, in a concern infinitely more weighty and important.

AND if it will not avail any at last, that they have depended upon the Word of any *Church*, or *Churchman*, upon Earth: much less will it avail them, that they have consulted with Flesh and Blood; and can plead the Dictates of *them* against the Dictates of God himself. And yet it is to be feared,
 2 that

that many Men, in this *Question*, upon S E R M.
 which their eternal State depends, instead I.
 of consulting our *Lord*, and his *Apostles*,
 what is truly required of them in order to
 Justification and Salvation, turn their
 Thoughts another way: and consult their
 own Lusts, and Passions, and Tempers, and
 Designs in this World, what will be the most
 consistent with them; and how far they will
 let them go towards a Resolution of this
Enquiry. But this is even to advise with
Satan himself, and with all the Enemies of
 God, and of a Man's own Happiness, what
 it is that Almighty God requires; and what
 it is that will bring him to that Happiness,
 which it is *their* Desire, he should never ar-
 rive at.

THUS have I gone over the *three prin-*
cipal Points of which I thought it proper to
 speak, before we enter upon the *Debate* it
 self. There are some other *Particulars*,
 which are consequences from *these*: and
 which it is likewise highly useful for us to
 consider, in order to make our *Enquiry* the
 more effectual, and successful. But these
 must reserve for another opportunity.



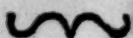
Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

SERMON II.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th Verse.

Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal Life?

SERM.
II.



IN my former Discourse I observed to you, that this was the curious *Enquiry* of a Student of the *Law* of *Moses*, in order to try what Answer would be given to so important a *Question*, by our blessed Lord, who appeared in the World with the Character of the *Messiah*, sent by God into it, to instruct Mankind in the right way to Happiness; though not received or acknowledged as such by the Person who made this *Enquiry*: and that it was our Duty, and becoming our Professions, who believe in

Jesus

Jesus Christ, as one sent on so gracious an S E R M.
Errand, to make the same *Enquiry*, with all II.
the serious Solicitude which a Business of
so vast Importance requires. And, in order
to proceed successfully in the *Enquiry*,

1. I LAID down carefully and distinctly
the *great Question*, as it concerns us of la-
ter Ages; who are generally educated in
the Knowledge, and continue long in the
profession of the *Christian Religion*: viz.
What are those Terms and Conditions,
which are required on our Parts; and up-
on which, God Almighty will, for the sake
of *Jesus Christ*, and of what he did and suf-
fered to that End, forgive us our Sins, com-
mitted during this profession of the *Christi-
an Religion*, and finally justify or acquit us
at the great Day, and make us afterwards e-
ternally Happy? This, I told you, is the
Enquiry in which we are concerned: which
it is of infinitely more importance to us to
regard than any other thing in the World.

2. I URGED some Considerations pro-
per to make us sensible of the great impor-
tance of this *Enquiry*; and the great hazard
of being misled, and mistaken in it: and
this in order to make us truly serious, and
truly

S E R M. truly solicitous not to be imposed upon, in
 II. this grand Affair.



3. I SHEWED you that the only secure Method of proceeding, and the only safe way of coming to a Resolution of this *Question*, is to consult the *New Testament* ourselves, in which we have a plain and full Account of what our blessed Lord himself, and they who were immediately commissioned by Him, declared concerning this Matter; and that all other ways and methods are unsuccessful, and full of Danger. But I then told you likewise, that, in order to our arriving at a true account of the important *Question* now before us, there were some other particulars that deserve to be carefully observed: and though these be indeed but so many consequences from the forementioned Heads; yet, I cannot but think it very well worth our while distinctly to propose, and consider them. As

I. THAT the *Terms of Salvation*, and *Acceptance* with God, are what He hath made them; and of so inflexible a Nature, that it is not in our Power to bend, or alter them, as we please, into what Shape, or Nature, we think fit. And this is plain: because

because it did not belong to us to contrive or frame them ; but to the Supreme Lord of all things. It is *He*, to whom it belongs to propose a method of Reconciliation to his *Creatures* ; and *He* alone, whose Office it is to fix the Conditions of this Reconciliation : because He alone knows what is in all respects fitting, and agreeable to the eternal Laws of Reason, and Wisdom ; of which we our selves could not be proper and impartial Judges. *He* hath, by Virtue of his Wisdom, Goodness, and Power, an undoubted Right to give us new Laws ; and to lay upon us the Conditions of a *Second Covenant*, as well as of a *First* : But we have no Right, either from Wisdom, or Power, to give Laws to Him ; or to fix the *Terms* proper for him to accept.

I F therefore he hath offered any particular Terms and Conditions, upon which he will accept us ; if He hath sent his *Son*, and his *Apostles* to lay open these *Terms* : here we must rest, and remember that it is not our Business to attempt any alteration of these *Terms* ; and that it is the most fruitless as well as arrogant Imagination to think of doing it. In vain doth any Mortal

SERM. tal wish or desire them to be other than
 II. what they are determin'd to be in his Will :
 and in vain will it be for the greatest or
 wisest of us all to attempt to accommodate
 and bend them to our *Schemes*, or our In-
 clinations. The *System* of *Christianity* was
 long ago fram'd, and the *Scheme* of Salva-
 tion laid, in the Breast of the Almighty, as
 it was design'd in Time to appear : and this
System hath long ago been written by the
Evangelists and *Apostles* ; and this *Scheme*
 hath long ago been proposed in the *New*
Testament, for the Benefit of all who are
 in a Frame and Disposition of Mind capable
 of receiving Benefit. God hath there shewn
 us, which is the Way to the Salvation He
 promiseth. If, therefore, we will arrive at
 his Salvation ; it must be in the Paths which
 he hath mark'd out ; and we must, indeed,
 either not think of going to Heaven ; or we
 must go to it, in *his* Way, and not in our
 own.

It is necessary to observe this, because
 the Generality of *professed Christians*, tho'
 they have Desire enough of being happy
 hereafter ; yet it must be in their own Way ;
 and they will not depart from their own
Schemes,

Schemes, and their own Wishes. Nay, S E R M. they seem to think it much more fit that II. God Almighty should come down to *their* Terms, than that themselves should go up to *his*. The Young Man, in the Gospel, was *not far from the Kingdom of God*, as our Lord thought : because he came to Him with some Disposition, and some Desire after Happiness. He was willing enough to be his Disciple, and to be saved by him ; if the *Terms* of his Discipleship and Salvation should appear such as he could comply with. But when he found that the *Circumstances* of his professing the Gospel at that Time were such, that he must divest himself of his large Possessions ; and follow our Lord with an entire Dependence upon him for the common Necessaries of Life ; and share in common with him the Wants and Necessities to which He expos'd himself : he went away sorrowful ; griev'd to hear that he could not be made happy by Him at less expence, and that the Terms of his Salvation were so uneasy to be comply'd with. Thus it is with many *Professors* of Christianity in later Ages. They are, in this Sense, *not far from the Kingdom of God,*

SERM.

II.

God, that they desire the Happiness of Christians, and of such as belong to that Kingdom: but then they are sorrowful to hear of the Terms plainly requir'd; if they don't suit their present Inclinations, and Designs. And so they either depart from our Lord; and give up all Pretenses to his Favour, and his Salvation: or else they lay hold of one Pretext or other, or alter those *Terms*; and amuse themselves with some sort of present *Peace* and Tranquillity, by making them consist and comply with their own Desires, and Wishes. Let this therefore be always remember'd, that our Fancies, or Tempers, or Desires, cannot make the *Terms* of our *Acceptance* other than what they are already; fix'd and determin'd by the *Father* of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, with whom there is no *Variableness*, nor *shadow of turning*: who, after having view'd all Things relating to our Nature, and his own, upon the Principles of unerring Wisdom, appointed the Bounds of his own Mercy, and the Conditions of our Happiness; neither of which is it in our Power either to enlarge or diminish.

N O R

NOR is it any other than egregious Folly for us to imagine that He himself will at last vary from his own Terms ; and, after He hath declar'd and promulgated Rules, by which he assures us He will be govern'd in the Distribution of his Love and Favour, to flatter our selves that he will depart from these Rules, for *our Sakes*, who would not depart from our own unreasonable Practises either for *his* Sake, or *our own* ; and that he will adapt his Proceedings at last to *our* Practice, in Pity to *us*, who would not adapt our Practice to *his* Laws. And yet I know of but this one Way in which any Alteration or Abatement, or *new Modification*, of the *Covenant of Grace* can be hop'd for ; viz. that God himself will at last new model it, and alter it into some other Form : The Weakness of which Imagination I shall have occasion hereafter more fully to lay open. At present I make this Observation, that the *Terms of Acceptance* are establish'd and unalterable ; as God himself hath fix'd them in the Gospel : because, unless we be persuaded of this, all our *Enquiries* after them will be only so many Speculations, and fruitless Searches ; rather serving

S E R M. serving to satisfy Curiosity, than to direct
 II. Practice. For if we entertain a Thought,
 that those *Terms*, tho' solemnly settled, and
 solemnly promulgated, by the Son of God
 and his Apostles, may be again altered, and
 changed into something more agreeable to
 us, and more consistent with our Ways;
 the *Gospel* can have but little, very little,
 effect upon our Minds, under the power-
 ful Assaults of any considerable Temptati-
 on. Pleasure, Honour, and Profit, will
 work strongly upon a Mind fluctuating in
 uncertainty about the Consequences of
 things; or made unstable by the flattering
 Hope that the Consequences at last may not
 be found so terrible as they are represented
 in the Gospel. But if we be possess'd before-
 hand that *such* are the *Terms* of *Accep-*
tance, as the plain Declarations of the *New*
Testament make them; and that *such* they
 will be found at last: then our serious En-
 quiries after them will have a great and
 powerful Influence upon our Conduct; and
 be of more force than the Efforts of Flesh
 and Blood, or the Insinuations of this tran-
 sitory World. But,

2. A N O T H E R

2. ANOTHER very *necessary* Rule to be SERM.
 observed in this important *Enquiry*, is, that II.
 all preconceived Notions of our own ; all 
 the Impressions of Education ; all the In-
 clinations of Sense ; all the Influences of
 Temporal Interest, and every thing that
 may cast a Cloud before our Eyes, or pre-
 vent our seeing or receiving the Truth, must
 be disregarded, in comparison of any one
 plain Declaration of the *New Testament*
 upon this Head. This is so necessary, that
 it is in vain to search after any Truth ; un-
 less all Prejudices, and evil Habits of Think-
 ing, or Acting, inconsistent with it, be laid
 aside, and for the present disregarded. And
 much more necessary is it in this most *Im-*
portant Enquiry, that our Minds should
 lay aside *every weight* which will incline
 them against Truth, and weigh up the con-
 trary Balance in which that inestimable
 Jewel is tryed ; that we should be perfectly
 willing to find that *True*, which is *True*,
 whether we find it or no ; that we should
 be as free as possible from the Biass im-
 press'd upon the Soul, by former Schemes
 received upon the Authority of others, or
 by Evil Habits built upon our own Sin and
 Folly ;

SERM. Folly; that we should go to those Books in
 II. which the Account of this is laid before us,
 with Hearts disposed to Truth; and indifferent whether this Account shall be found to contradict our former Notions, and Practices, or not.

THE force of Passion, and Prejudice, against *Truth* is so great, that Men tolerably well skill'd in that sort of Learning, may sometimes be hindred from seeing even the plain Truth of a *Mathematical Demonstration*, by some private Resentment, and secret Pique against others: in which Science there is no complaint of indeterminate Ideas, or obscure Expression. In like manner, set a Man about the Enquiry we are now speaking of, who hath been used to a way of thinking at second hand; and is in love with the Notions received from others, tho' never so false: his Labours shall be found to tend to little, unless it be to strain the obscure Passages into a Sense agreeable to his own Notions; whilst the plain ones are neglected. Or, set a Man about this Enquiry, immersed in this World; embarrass'd with a sordid love of Gain, or Honour; or captivated by Lust, and sensual Pleasure: and how

How hardly will He, if at all, receive any thing, as the Will of God, inconsistent with his present Views? What a Bias will his own Wishes, and his perverted Will, clap upon his Understanding? and how many Ways will He find, if He have any Thoughts of Religion at all, to reconcile the plainest contrary Declarations of God's Will to his own State, and his own Hopes? This makes me say that, if we would make the *Enquiry* with Success, we must be willing to find that true which is so; and that we must renounce to all our own Wishes, or Hopes, or Desires, whether founded upon former *Notions* infused into us by others; or upon former *Practices* indulged by our selves.

NAY, how weak; how unreasonable; how injurious, and pernicious a thing is it to be otherwise dispos'd? For *we* make not *Truth*: but it is what it is, and what it ever will be, whether we receive it, or not; and, when plainly propos'd to us, it is our Condemnation, if we reject it, or prefer any thing before it. And if we have been engag'd in such a Habit of Sin as may incline us to one side more than another: the farther we go in this Way, by establishing this

Habit

SERM. *Habit of evil Practice by an Error fixed*
 II. in the *Understanding*, we are so much the
 more deeply engaged in a Course of Ruine;
 and so much the more irrecoverably lost.
 For by this means we go not in the Dark;
 but do as it were light and direct our selves
 all along the Paths of Misery. We go se-
 curely perhaps for the present: but at last
 the Sight and Sense of our wilful Error
 will be the most painful Horror, and in-
 supportable Burthen. This should engage
 Sinners, that have any Thoughts of finding
 Mercy, to break off their *evil Habits*: be-
 cause the longer they proceed in them, the
 more effectually will they blind their Eyes,
 and the more certainly will they indispose
 them, either to see the Truth of God's Co-
 venant, tho' written in never so plain Cha-
 racters; or to receive it to any purpose, if
 they should not avoid the seeing it. For
 nothing unqualifies Men for *Divine Truths*,
 of Importance to Happiness, so much as the
Habit of Sin: nothing makes Men more
 afraid of, or unfit for, the *Light*, than their
 having exercis'd themselves in the *Works*
of Darknefs.

3. ANOTHER Particular I must mention, of great use in this Enquiry, is, that we must take *all* the Declarations of the New Testament upon this Head, into the Account; and not *some* only: and then that, if there be any seeming Variety in any of them; the more obscure must be interpreted so as to be agreeable to the most plain and repeated Declarations. This it is but reasonable to require: because neither our Saviour, nor his Apostles, have in any one single Portion of the *New Testament*, laid down the several Branches of the *New Covenant*; but spoken of them, as distinct Occasions gave them Ground to do: sometimes of one, sometimes of another. Now all things, equally declar'd by Them to be *Conditions* of our pardon, or salvation, are with equal Willingness, and equal regard, to be received by us. And this rule will prevent all those Mistakes in us, which others have fatally run into, by attending to some single Declarations upon this Subject; to the Neglect and Contradiction of others, perhaps more plain and intelligible. This will teach us that, if one place of Scripture attributes Happiness to

D

one

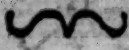
S E R M.
II.

SERM. one *Virtue*, or one *Act* of the Mind ; and
 II. another as plainly to another ; and a third
 to a third ; and a fourth to the Performance
 of the whole Will of God, without men-
 tioning Particulars: I say, This will teach us
 not to overlook one Passage for the sake of
 another, not more plain, or more intelli-
 gible ; when *all* have the same Stamp of
 Divine Authority ; and when, without re-
 garding *all*, we cannot pretend to know
 the whole of what Almighty God hath de-
 clared concerning this Affair. The acting
 contrary to this, is just as if the *rebellious*
Subjects of a *Prince*, now to be restored to
 his Favour upon such and such *Conditions*,
 should attend only to one or two of these
Conditions ; and pass over all the rest, as
 if they were not of equal Importance, and
 had not the Sanction of the same Autho-
 rity.

AND then, supposing there should be
 some *Obscurity* in one or more Passages rela-
 ting to this Affair ; there can be no Danger
 to Us, but in pretending to understand these,
 and at the same time understanding them
 so, as to invalidate the Design of the more
 plain and express Declarations : and this out
 of

of a Desire to reconcile our own Practices to S E R M.
the Hopes of Happiness. For it is no Crime II.
in any Christian, not to understand an ob-
scure or dubious Passage ; provided he hath
nothing wilful to accuse himself of, in this
want of Understanding : But the Crime is,
to resolve to understand it in such a Sense,
as may best consist with his false Hopes ; tho'
it consists not at all with those plainer Texts,
about the Meaning of which there can be
no Doubt.

LET us, therefore, but take into the
Account the *Whole* of what is, in several
Places of the *New Testament*, made ne-
cessary to our obtaining God's Favour, and
Eternal Happiness. And, if we meet with
any thing which we do not perfectly un-
derstand upon this Head, let us but attend
to the plain and repeated Declarations ;
and not presume to neglect *them* for the
sake of those which are not so ; or to in-
terpret those which are not so, after such a
manner as to *contradict* those which are so :
and I dare say, we need not fear any Error in
this great Enquiry. For the Terms absolute-
ly required are plainly, and frequently, ex-
pressed : and what is so, is, in every sort of

S E R M. Writing, allowed to explain what is not so ;
 II. but what is not so is never allowed to be
 interpreted so as to contradict what is so. And therefore it will be unjustifiable and inexcusable in any one, to lay hold on any part of the *New Testament*, or any *Text* in it, which is in any respect obscure ; and to oppose this to the plainest and most repeated : in order to build a *Doctrine*, or a *Scheme*, upon it, not to be reconciled to *these* ; or perhaps absolutely inconsistent with them. This is not to consult the Honour of God : nor is it the way to find out the *Terms* of our own Happiness.

THESE *Rules*, and *Observations*, which I have now laid down, are in order to your careful and exact Examination of what I design to say, when I come to lay before you the *Terms* of our *Acceptance* and *Salvation*, as they appear to me in the *New Testament* : to which I cannot now proceed for want of Time ; but before which, it was necessary to commend to your Thoughts the *Considerations* before-mentioned ; which will, I hope, be of great use in all your *future Enquiries* after the *Way to Eternal Life*. And all but little enough

nough, or rather, I fear, too little, to make the Generality of Christians as sincere in their Enquiries, and as ready to embrace the true Answer to them, as they ought to be.

S E R M.
II.

AND indeed I have mentioned, and insisted upon, all these Precautions; because it is *Eternal Life* we are enquiring after; and the Favour of that God, whose Favour is better than Life, and whose Displeasure is infinitely worse than Death. Were they the Concerns of this Life, that fleeth away like a Shadow, and is not to be stopp'd by all the Art, or all the Power of Man, about which we are enquiring; it would be of no such vast Importance to be solicitous about the Matter. Let *Passion*, or *Pride*, or *Covetousness* direct us; Let *Ambition*, or *Lust*, blind our Eyes; an End would quickly come, when this World could have no part in us, But yet, behold the Perverseness of Mankind. Were the *Enquiry* after the Pleasures, or Riches, or Honours, of this World; had there any Person of great Sagacity, or uncommon Penetration, appeared in it, to direct them in the sure Way to these Riches, or Pleasures, or Honours, that must end with

S E R M. this Temporal Life : how few Mistakes
 II. should we find made even by the weakest
 of Men? The *Covetous* would easily understand, and make themselves perfect Masters of the Way to Wealth ; the *Voluptuous* would never miss the Path of Pleasure ; nor the *Ambitious*, the Road to Preferment, and Honour, and Titles. None of *them* would trust any Direction at second hand, when they could consult the Oracle it self. None of *them* would be diverted from their Enquiry by any Impulse contrary to that by which they professed to be directed. None of *them* would hazard the Disappointment of their main End, by relying on any thing but what was plainly proposed by their Guide. And all of them would be Proof against every Attempt that could be used, either to deceive their Understandings, or to influence their Wills to contrary Ways.

BUT let it not always be said, that the *Children of this World are wiser, in their Generation* ; wiser in their Pursuits and Enquiries after Trifles and Misery and Ruine ; less capable of being imposed upon ; more guarded and secure in their Way, than the *Children of Light*, who profess to have nobler

nobler Things in View; a State of unchange-
able Happiness, Eternal in the Heavens,
after this poor, uncertain State is at an End.

S E R M.
II.
~

If we be the *Children of Light*; if we have
Eternal Life truly in View, and be truly
inquisitive after the *Way* that leads to it; let
us consider what *Eternal Life* is; how
much it outweighs all that *this Life* can
offer us; how much it exceeds all our pre-
sent Conceptions which are formed upon
very imperfect Ideas; how vastly it will re-
compense all the Pains, and Care, and Cau-
tion of the strictest Enquirer; how uncon-
ceivable an Happiness must be contained in
the Favour of God, the Supreme and Origi-
nal Father of all Things: and we shall think
no Precaution too much to secure us from
Mistake, whilst we are seeking our Way to
it; no Care superfluous to defend us from
the great Enemies of this *Enquiry*; no Pains,
or Study, too great on our Parts, in order
to be fully satisfied, *What we must do to in-
herit Eternal Life.*

To the Resolution of which grand *Ques-
tion* I design to proceed the next Opportu-
nity.



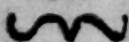
Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

S E R M O N III.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th Verse.

Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal Life?

SERM.
III.



THE Enquiry which I told you, these Words gave me Occasion to propose, as of Importance to Persons educated, and continuing, in the Profession of the Faith of Christ, (in which Number we, and all of later Ages, generally are) is this: What it is that the *Gospel* requires of Men, who believe in *Jesus Christ*, and have been baptized into his Religion, and acknowledge Him for their Master, in order to their Acquittance from any Sins they have at any time been wilfully guilty of, during their
Christian

Christian Profession; and to their final Justification at the Day of Judgment; and to their Eternal Happiness after this. And, having in Two several Discourses endeavoured to engage your Attention, and to raise your Solicitude after Truth, in a Matter of such unspeakable Moment; as well as to point out to you the true Method of your coming to a well-grounded Satisfaction, (*viz.* your examining whatsoever is at any time laid before you on this Head by all the plain, and intelligible Texts in the *New Testament* concerning it, carefully laid together, and sincerely compared :) I come now to a particular Resolution of the *Question* proposed, which I think may be comprized under the four following Heads.

I. IT is required of a *Christian*, who hath been a *wilful Sinner*, that he renounce, and forsake, his Sins.

II. IT is required of him, that he sincerely, and with Perseverance, practise the contrary Virtues. And tho' to *these Two* all other Terms may be reduced; yet it is very proper particularly to mention two more, *viz.*

III. IT is not sufficient that the Sinner forsake the Sins of which he stands guilty before

S E R M. fore God, and amend his outward Life; but
 III. he must entirely forgive the Offenses, and
 ~~~~~ Trespasses, of others against himself: which  
 is so necessary a Condition, that without it  
 even those Sins which he hath forsaken shall  
 never be forgiven him.

IV. IN the *Case of Injustice, or Fraud,*  
*or Oppression*; it is required of the Sinner,  
 if he ever hope for Pardon, and Acceptance,  
 not only that he leave off Injustice for the  
 future, and act justly, and honestly; (which  
 alone is not sufficient;) but also that he make  
*Restitution*, in whatsoever Instances, he  
 hath, by any ways or means, injured any one  
 in the World.

THESE are the four particular *Terms,*  
*or Conditions*, upon which *Christians*, who  
 have been *wilful Sinners*, may hope for  
 Acceptance; and without which the *Gospel*  
 gives them not the least Ground for such  
 Hope. They may be all comprized in one  
*general Proposition*, viz. That it is required  
 of *Christians*, who have the Guilt of any  
 Sins upon them, to endeavour heartily, and  
 sincerely, for the future, to practise the whole  
 Will of God, revealed in the Book of *Nature*,  
 and the *Gospel of Jesus Christ*: and that

that without this honest, sincere, and universal Obedience, they cannot hope to be accepted, for the Sake, and upon the *Terms*, of *Jesus Christ*. But it is fit to be more particular; and therefore I have chosen to speak of this Matter under the *forementioned Heads*: every one of which I design distinctly to consider, *first*, shewing that they are most plainly required; and *then*, shewing the Fitness and Reasonableness of them. And after we are fully satisfied concerning these, they will be so many infallible Directions to us; and prevent all fatal Mistakes, which otherwise may be occasioned by a too great Readiness to lay hold on any obscure, or misinterpreted, Passage of Scripture, for the Support of any other Notions concerning this important Matter.

THESE are the *Points*, I say, which I design particularly to handle. But the *Enquiry* now before us, relating, as you see, to the *Case* of such *professed Christians* as have been *wilful Sinners*, and so have need of other Conditions to be offered them, than that of a perfect, and unspotted Holiness; it will not be an useless, or improper Digression, before I come to the particular handling

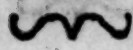
S E R M. handling of the Points now laid down; to  
 III. consider, *who they are that may be called wilful Sinners*; and the several *Sorts*, and *Degrees* of such as are so: that so, we may be all sensible that the very best of us may have need of some or other of these *Terms* of *Condescension* offered us thro' *Jesus Christ*, and, for his Sake only, made *Terms* of *Acceptance* with God. And here, it being manifest that all Those may justly be called *wilful Sinners*, who sin, either *first*, against sufficient Light; or *secondly*, against the Dictates of their own Consciences to the contrary: it will be proper to shew *who* they are that may be said thus to sin, either against the *one*, or the *other*. Now,

I. ALL those may be said to act against sufficient Light, and sufficient Evidence to the contrary, who have fair Opportunities and Abilities of knowing their Duty; who profess a Religion, and live in any particular Place, or at any particular Time, in which their Duty is laid plainly before them. And here I must remark that not only those *Sinners* who have attended to this Evidence, and been sensible of the Directions of this Light, may be said to sin against it; but such



such also, as have wilfully refused to give S E R M.  
any *attention* to it, and have rejected the III.  
offers of its Direction, may equally be said  
to sin against it; because they wilfully refuse  
to pay any Respect, or Attention to it: and  
not only upon this account; but because  
they act against the Maxims which *that* is  
perpetually offering to their View, and which  
they might, if they pleased, be very well  
acquainted with. For no *Ignorance* that is  
wilful, and affected; or that proceeds from  
a Resolution to guard against better Informa-  
tion, and is founded upon an ill-disposed  
Mind; can avail a Sinner any thing, or di-  
stinguish him at all from the most wilful of  
Sinners. And this ought to be remarked,  
because many Persons seem to be so weak, as  
to chuse voluntarily not to be better in-  
form'd, because they are pretty well resolved  
not to alter their bad Courses; and then to  
imagine that their *Ignorance* will be a sort  
of an Excuse for their Vices. Whereas this  
sort of *Ignorance* gives the Man all the *Es-*  
*sence*, and *Guilt*, of a *wilful Sinner*; nay,  
and makes Him a Sinner against that very  
Light and Evidence, to which He wilfully  
refuseth to attend. So that, with respect

S E R M. 10 persons who have professed to believe in

III.  Jesus Christ, and to receive Him for their Master, (of whom we are now particularly speaking) it may be affirmed that, not only *They* sin against the Light of his *Gospel*, who, at the very time of their committing Sin, know, and are sensible, that the Action they are going about is condemned by his *Gospel*; but also *They* who, after having professed Faith in Him, are wilfully careless and negligent in their Enquiries after his Will; and chuse, upon very bad Principles, rather not to know, than to know, the Rules which He hath laid down. For this, I say, is manifestly sinning against the *Light* of that *Gospel*, which they wilfully refuse to consult, or attend to, upon a Suspicion that it may disturb them in their present Course; and consequently, upon a Resolution of continuing in it without that Disturbance.

THESE Two sorts of Christians therefore are *wilful Sinners*: such, as sin against the *Rules* of the *Gospel*, knowing that they condemn their Practice at the very time of their sinning; and such likewise, as sin against those same Rules, with an *Ignorance* which  
proceeds

proceeds from a perverse and deliberate Desire of being undisturbed in their Course: an Ignorance, in which they wilfully entrench themselves, as some sort of Security against the Guilt of Sin; but which, in truth, is as great an Aggravation of it, as can well be imagined. The Difference between these *Two*, is only such a Difference as may be supposed between Two disobedient Sons of the same Father: the *one* of which listens to his Will, and hears his Commands, and afterwards transgresseth them; and the *other*, whenever his Father is going to declare his Will to Him, stops his Ears, and refuseth to hear his Voice, merely because He is resolved to go on in his own Way, without any Regard to his Will. And which of these Two is the most criminal, it is hard to determine: only that there seems more Resolution of Disobedience in the *latter*. Such Persons as I have been now describing, must not expect to be reckoned by our Saviour amongst those Servants *who know not their Master's Will, and so shall be beaten with fewer stripes* than others: for the *Servants* meant in that Saying of our *Lord's*, are such as have not the Opportunity of knowing their Master's Will

SER M. Will so fully as others have; not such as  
 III. have the Opportunity, and wilfully refuse to  
 make use of it.

2. As there are *Two sorts* of Sinners, who may be said to sin against *sufficient Light*: so likewise, there are *Two sorts* of Sinners, who may be said to sin against their own Judgments and Consciences; and consequently, to be *wilful Sinners*. First, such as, at the very time of their sinning, perceive within themselves something which forbids that Action, and represents the Unreasonableness of it, and the Anger of God consequent upon it: and secondly, such as, tho' they have by a Custom of sinning worn off all Sense of their Duty so far as to sin without any present Disturbance, and Uneasiness of Mind, at the very time of sinning; yet, before this habitual Practice of Vice, have often owned and acknowledged, or, during the continuance of it, do, upon many Occasions, and in their most serious Intervals, judge and determine that the contrary Course of Action is truly their Duty, and what alone can entitle them to the Favour of God. Concerning the former of these, no one will doubt but that they sin against  
 their



their Consciences : because they are warned, and made uneasy, by them at the very time of sinning. And, as to the latter, I think it equally certain that they likewise do the same. For they sin against that Judgment which they have heretofore often made, before an Habit of Sin had made them insensible ; they sin against their own Determinations in their most serious moments ; they sin against a former Judgment of their Minds, which their Reason and Consideration hath never yet reversed, or ever determined to be false or groundless ; they sin against that which was the Voice of their Conscience, when they had any awake in their Minds ; and consequently, They may be truly said to sin against their Judgments, and Consciences ; tho', at the very time of their sinning, they have no present Allarm and Disturbance from them.

ALL the Difference between the *Two* Sorts of *Sinners* I have now mentioned, is the same that may be supposed between Two servants of the same Master : the *One* of which having not shewn his Disobedience so often, the Master still attends upon him, and directs him in his Actions, hoping to keep  
E him,

S E R M. him, by this means, from all bad and pernicious Practices, which nevertheless he sometimes ventures upon, even under his Master's Eye; and the *Other* having shewn the same Disobedience, under his Master's immediate Direction, more frequently, the Master thinks it useless any longer to attend upon Him, or to warn him against any particular Action. But yet, this Servant, tho' He offends not against his Master's present express Warning to the contrary; He wilfully offends against all his past Rules, and all those Directions which He hath heretofore given him. So that his Case is worse than that of the *Former*, in this, that the *Former* hath not sinned beyond the Patience of his Master: or so as to forfeit his constant Attendance upon him: which *He* hath done; and still persists in that Disobedience. Just thus it is with the *Two sorts* of Sinners now mentioned. Before an Habit of Sin hath made it otherwise; the Man hath generally the Remonstrances of his Conscience, whilst He is thinking to venture upon any Vice. But Conscience may at last be supposed to be weary of that good Office; and to find it fruitless to give so particular an Attendance upon

upon the Sinner. Yet the Sinner nevertheless sins against it, because He continues to sin against all it's former Remonstrances; against that Judgment and Determination which He himself hath formerly acknowledged to be just and reasonable; and which He cannot think, or prove to be otherwise, even in the Heighth of his Wickedness. So that it is manifest that *He* sins against his own Judgment and Conscience, whose Conscience hath heretofore sufficiently warned Him against the Course He pursues, and sufficiently recommended the contrary to Him; as well as *He*, whose Conscience still continues to do that good Office: and consequently, that both have equally the Guilt of *wilful Sinners*.

THOSE professed Christians, therefore, who do, in any single Action, or in any Course of Actions, transgress those Rules, which they know to be laid down in the *Gospel*; and they also, who wilfully refuse to know those Rules, merely that they may the more quietly practice what themselves think fit; Both *wilfully* act against sufficient *Light*, and *Evidence*: and therefore are both certainly *wilful Sinners*. So likewise, they

S E R M. who do, either in any particular Action, or  
 III. in any Course of Actions, sin against the present Checks and Warnings of their own Consciences; and they also, who sin against the past Determination of their own Judgments, and the serious Result of their own best Reason, tho' wholly unmindful of it just at the time of *sinning*; both *wilfully* sin against their Consciences: and therefore are both certainly *wilful Sinners*. And now, from what hath been said upon this Subject, it will not be improper to observe more particularly the several *Degrees*, and *Ranks*, of those who may justly be stiled *wilful Sinners*. As

I. I T is plain that in the lowest degree of *wilful Sinners* are such Persons as have a sincere Desire of avoiding all Sin; such as keep up in their Minds a warm Sense of the Guilt of it; and do, in the main Tenour of their Lives, demonstrate the Sincerity of their outward Profession of *Christianity*, by observing its Laws, behaving themselves according to its Rules, and resisting great and frequent Temptations to sin: but nevertheless are sometimes, through the Violence of some particular Temptations, hurried into such a Behaviour, and such Actions, as they know to

be



be condemned by the Gospel they profess, SERM.  
III. and to be displeasing to Almighty God. But in this State they do not continue, or glory; but lament and abhor their Condition; and by Amendment raise themselves as soon as possible from it. These are *wilful Sinners*, in this particular Behaviour: because they do the thing which their *Consciences* condemn; and because they wilfully act in this Particular, against the Light of that Gospel which they enjoy. But it is hard to call such Persons by the Name justly bestowed upon those whose main Course of Living is directed and governed by a quite contrary Principle. For as *they* are not denominated *good* and *virtuous*, from one or two particular *good* and *virtuous* Actions; whilst the greatest part of their Lives is filled up with the contrary Practices: so neither can the *others* justly be denominated *wicked Men*, from one or two particular Commissions of Sin, whilst the main of their Lives hath been dedicated to *Virtue*; provided that, by their Amendment in those particular Instances, they have given sufficient Proof of their Repentance. But what I observe at present is this, that such Persons are, in these Actions, *wilful*

SERM.

III.



*Sinners*, for the Reasons before given; and that they certainly stand in need of an *Aid* of *Grace*, from *Almighty God*, in order to be assured of Pardon and Forgiveness; because they have done what they themselves acknowledge they ought not to have done; and have wilfully committed what deserveth Punishment; what they cannot justify, but are forced to condemn themselves for.

2. IN the next Degree of *wilful Sinners*, may be placed such Persons as have some Sense of Religion, and some sort of Resolution of practising the Duties of it: but yet, when any considerable Temptation offers it self, yield up themselves to the Power of it; and at that time, when only they can experience the Sincerity of their own Minds, *viz.* in the Day of *Trial*, do very often wilfully fall into grievous and deliberate Sins. I do not suppose these Persons to be so bad as to seek out Opportunities of sinning; or to harbour in their Minds before-hand any Designs of laying hold on such Opportunities: but, thro' some great Defect, or Negligence in themselves, to be surpriz'd, by almost every Trial, into Sin; and to give themselves Proofs of little, thro' their whole Behaviour,

haviour, besides the Weakness of their own S E R M.  
 Resolutions, and the ineffectual Sense they III.  
 have of the Truths of Religion. Of *those*,  
 mentioned under the foregoing *Head*, it  
 may be said that they are sincere, and settled  
 in the Ground-work of Religion; because  
 they resist many Temptations, and govern  
 the main part of their Lives by the Rules of  
 it: but of *these*, I fear, it can hardly be said  
 that they do both truly understand, and heart-  
 ily believe, the Nature and Importance of  
 what they profess; because whenever any  
 considerable Trial offers itself, (which alone  
 can prove whether a Man deceiveth himself  
 in this Matter, or not,) they find no Strength,  
 no Assistance, in those Principles which they  
 suppose or profess themselves to have; but  
 always renounce them for the sake of some  
 present Profit or Pleasure in sinning. When  
 none, or very little, Fruit is seen to proceed  
 from the good Seed sown; it is a certain  
 Sign that there is some Fault in the Ground  
 in which it is lodged. But,

3. IN the highest Order of *wilful Sinners*,  
 are to be placed those who are come to such  
 a Pitch in Wickedness, as to contrive and de-  
 sign Evil before-hand; to lay Scenes of

SERM. Sin; and to invite, or seek out, Temptations  
 III. and Opportunities for it, with a Resolution  
 of complying, and yielding to them. I cannot conceive any Degree of *Sinners* beyond this: and it will make but a small Difference in those of this *Order*, that *some* of them meet with much fewer Opportunities successful to their Wishes than *others* do. For in the Eye of God, and of Natural Justice, *He* hath all the Guilt of Sin, who deliberates and resolves upon the Action; whenever a fair Opportunity shall offer itself to him; and is always prepared for more and more Sins, as more and more Occasions present themselves. That *He* doth not always meet with these Opportunities, may be happy to others: but is no Alteration of his own inward Guilt. For the Guilt of Sin lies where the *Wilfulness* of it lies; and that is in the inward Design and deliberate Resolution: the longer Time any Person hath for the deliberating part, enhancing and increasing the *Wilfulness* of the Action.

THUS, in the Account of the Gospel, *Murders, Adulteries, Fornications*, and all Sins, are condemned, as in the Heart; and proceeding out of the Heart: *that is*, as designed, and resolved upon, within. In the  
 Eye



Eye of our Lord, He is an *Adulterer*, who hath deliberately resolved upon the committing *Adultery*; whether the Opportunity of doing it ever present itself, or not: And so, He is a *Murderer*, that is, He hath the Guilt of Murder before God, who hath resolved and decreed within himself, to take away his Neighbour's Life unjustly; whether He ever meet with a favourable Opportunity, or not.

And tho' Humane Governours cannot reach the Mind, or discover the secret Intention, but by the outward Act; and so cannot reasonably judge of Guilt but by the outward Act: yet there is all the Reason in the World that Almighty God should always judge of Guilt by the inward Act and Design; because it always lies there, and because He knows the inward Act of the mind in it self, much more perfectly than We can know it from any outward, or open Act. Nay, we ourselves never condemn the *outward Action*, but when it appears, at least, to have proceeded from a bad Design within. Who ever blamed a Machine, or Engine, or thought *that* guilty of Murder; because Men's Lives have been taken away by the Violence of it? Or, who ever thought

S E R M. thought a Brute guilty, in the Sense in which  
 III. a reasonable Creature is so, for having been the  
 Occasion of a Man's Death? Nay, who ever  
 condemned a Man as deserving Punishment,  
 if, through unavoidable Inadvertence, or de-  
 signing Good and Kindness, he hath proved  
 the Instrument of Death to a Person, to  
 whom he is known to have meant no Evil?  
 Yet in all these Cases there is the *material*  
*Action* which is in all Murthers; a taking a-  
 way the Life of a Man: notwithstanding  
 which, *Guilt* is not supposed to belong to  
 it, because there wants the Design, the De-  
 liberation, and the Resolution, knowingly  
 to do the Action. All this shews plainly  
 that it is in *these* that the Evil of Sin lies:  
 and that by these, the Men who have but  
 few Opportunities of bringing their inward  
 Resolutions to outward Acts, may be made  
 equal in Guilt to those who have many  
 more Opportunities of carrying their design-  
 ed Wickedness into action; *that is*, if they  
 have an equal Number of the same evil De-  
 signs within, and wicked deliberate Resolu-  
 tions. We may, indeed, suppose an accidental  
 Difference in this, that one Man's Heart may  
 relent and alter, when the Opportunity offers  
 it self;

it self; and another's may not. But of this S E R M.  
 God alone can judge: and therefore, to III.  
 Him alone it belongs to do it. These are  
 all the several *Orders*, and *Degrees*, of  
*wilful Sinners*, which I can think of: and  
 to one or other of these, All that come  
 under that Name may be reduced.

I SHALL only observe farther the Differ-  
 ence between these *Three sorts* of *wilful*  
*Sinners*, with respect to the *Habit* of sin-  
 ning. For though it be impossible to de-  
 fine exactly what Number of *wilful Sins*  
 shall constitute an *habitual Sinner*; as it is,  
 in any Case, what particular Number of  
 Actions are necessary to constitute an *Ha-*  
*bit*, or *Custom*: yet it is manifest that the  
*first sort* of Sinners cannot be called *habitu-*  
*al Sinners*, because the main Tenour of their  
 Lives is governed by the Moral Rules of the  
*Gospel*; and it is only in some few particu-  
 lar Instances of Temptation that they have  
 been overcome, and transported from the  
 general Bent and Biass of their Lives, in the  
 Course of which they have triumph'd over  
 many more of the same sort of Trials, and  
 Difficulties. It is manifest, in the next place,  
 that

SERM. that the two other sorts of wilful Sinners;  
 III. may justly be called *habitual*: because even  
 the better sort of them give themselves up  
 to the Power of all considerable Temptations;  
 suffering themselves to be carried by them into Sin;  
 and much more frequently yielding to the Strength  
 of the Trials they meet with, than using all the Force  
 of their Souls to resist and overcome them. But  
 with this remarkable Difference, that the *one*  
 of them do not design or resolve upon Sin before-hand;  
 or please themselves with the Thought and Deliberation  
 concerning it: whereas the *other* sort have given up  
 themselves to contrive their own Sins; to be their own  
 Tempters, and to yield to their own Temptations.

BUT though there be this very great Difference  
 between these *Three sorts* of wilful Sinners;  
 yet they agree in this, that they have all,  
 (the lowest as well as the highest Degree of them,)  
 done what they ought not to have done; that they  
 may all justly fear a Punishment from God,  
 proportionable to their several Estates; that they  
 all stand in need of an *Act of Grace*, and Favour,  
 from the great Judge of the World;



World; of *Terms of Condescension*, below **SERM.**  
those of exact and rigorous Justice: in or- **III.**  
der to their Reconciliation with an offended  
God; and to a well-grounded Peace, and  
Satisfaction within themselves.

**THE** *Terms* of which *Reconciliation*,  
and Favour, I laid down at the beginning of  
this Discourse: and shall distinctly prosecute,  
one after another, in my following Ser-  
mons.



**SERMON**

*Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.*

## SERMON IV.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th Verse.

*Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal Life?*

SERM.  
IV.



THE Enquiry we are now upon, is this, What it is that the *Gospel* requires of Men, who believe in *Jesus Christ*, and have been baptized into his Religion, and acknowledge him for their Master, in order to their Acquittance from any Sins which they have at any Time been wilfully guilty of, during their Christian Profession; and to their final Justification at the Day of Judgment; and to their Eternal Happiness after this. The *Answer* to this *Enquiry*, in my last Discourse, I laid down in *four Particulars*. And I observed to you

you, that all *four* might be comprized in this S E R M.  
one *general Proposition*, viz. That it is re- IV.  
quired of *Christians* who have been wilful  
Sinners, sincerely to endeavour for the fu-  
ture to practise the whole Will of God, any  
ways made known to them; and that with-  
out this Amendment, and sincere, universal  
Obedience, the Gospel gives them no  
Ground for Hopes of Pardon and Accept-  
ance, and Eternal Life: but that it would  
be more useful to discourse upon this Sub-  
ject, under the fore-mentioned Particulars.  
In order likewise to our knowing our own  
Condition, and the need we all have of some  
or other of these *Terms*, offered to such as  
have been *wilful Sinners*, I laid before you  
an Account of the Nature of *wilful Sin*;  
what it is that makes a Man a *wilful Sinner*;  
and what are the several Differences, and  
Degrees, of such as are *wilful Sinners*. And  
after having done this; I now come distinct-  
ly to consider, in their Order, every one of  
the four Propositions, laid down in my last  
Discourse: and this, *first*, with respect to  
their *Truth*; and *secondly*, with regard to  
their *Fitness*, and *Reasonableness*. The *first*  
*Proposition* is this,

I. I T

SERM.

IV.



I. IT is required, in the Gospel-Dispensation, of every Christian, who hath been in any sort, or any degree, a wilful Sinner, that He renounce, and forsake his Sins.

THE Truth of this will plainly appear from the following Proofs. In general, The Grace of God, i. e. his Mercy in the Gospel is declared by St. Paul, Titus ii. 12, 13. to have appeared unto all Men, teaching them to deny Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts; i. e. to renounce and have no Communication with them for the future. And at the 14. v. Christ is said to have given himself for us Christians, that he might first redeem us from all Iniquity; in order to redeem us at last from the Punishment of it. It is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners, saith the same Apostle, 1 Tim. i. 15. But then immediately mentioning himself, as an Example and Instance of this Truth, by the Name of the Chief of Sinners, on account of his having bitterly persecuted the Church of Christ; he plainly lets us know what sort of Sinners they are to whom this Salvation is given, viz. such as have left their Sins: as He had entirely, and with the utmost Abhorrence,



horrence, that great one of persecuting his SERM.  
Fellow-Creatures on the account of their IV.  
differing from Him in their Religion, and   
Worship of God.

In Pursuance of this main Design of Christianity, all *that name the name of Christ* are commanded to depart from Iniquity, 2 Tim. ii. 19. to have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, Eph. v. 11. which cannot be avoided without forsaking them; to *abhor that which is evil*, Rom. xii. 9. to *abstain from all appearance*, or, as the Words signify, *every sort of Evil*, 1 Theff. v. 22. to *mortify their Members which are upon Earth*, under which Expression all Sin is contained, Col. iii. 5. Particularly, *He that hath stolen*, is required to *steal no more*. Eph. iv. 28. Agreeably to this, the same St. Paul, describing the Acceptance, or Justification, purchased by Christ, expresseth himself thus, Rom. viii. 1. *There is now no Condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*, (i. e. which believe in him, and profess his Religion) adding these Words, *who walk not after the Flesh*. And v. 12. *we, Christians, are Debtors, not to the Flesh, to live after the Flesh*: And v. 13. *For if ye*  
F live

S E R M. *live after the Flesh, ye shall die, i. e. eternally : but if ye, thro' the Spirit, mortify the Deeds of the Body, (which is a Scripture-Expression for renouncing and forsaking all Sin,) ye shall live ; that is, enjoy the Favour of God eternally. In another place, after having reckoned up the Promises of God thro' Jesus Christ, he infers, Having therefore these Promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 1. that is, let us, who are Christians, if we hope to obtain the Promises of God, cleanse our selves from all Sin. Timothy is commanded to turn away from, or disown, all such Christians as having the Form of Godliness, deny the Power thereof. 2 Tim. iii. 5. And lest all this should not be sufficient ; continual Warnings are given to such as are professed Christians, of the Danger and Eternal Punishment of Sin. They are assured over and over again by St. Paul, that it is for their Sins that the Wrath of God will come upon them. Col. iii. 6. He appeals to Christians themselves, 1 Cor. vi. 9. Know ye not that the Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor other Sinners, there counted up, shall inherit the Kingdom*

Kingdom of God. Gal. v. 19, 20, 21, the Works of the Flesh are enumerated to *Christians*, that is, all the principal Sins, of the which the *Apostle* tells them, as He saith He had before, that *they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*: And at v. 24. *They that are truly Christs*, i. e. who will have any Benefit by him, are such as *have crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts*. Chap. vi. v. 7, 8, the *Galatians* are called upon again *not to be deceived*; and assured that *God is not mocked*: but that *he that soweth to the Flesh*, i. e. who doth the Works of the Flesh, *shall of the Flesh reap Corruption*. The *Ephesian Christians* are likewise called upon, *not to be deceived with vain Words*, Eph. v. 6. and assured that *because of these things*, i. e. the Sins before counted up, *the Wrath of God cometh upon the Children of Disobedience*; and that no such Sinners as are there mentioned, *have any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God*, ver. 5.

ALL which, as it was the immediate Instruction of God, to his *Apostle*; so was it agreeable to the open Declarations of *Christ*, when He was upon Earth. In his own Ac-

SERMON. count of his Proceedings at the great Day,  
 IV. He brings in such as professed themselves his  
 Disciples, and had many Gifts to boast of;  
 to whom yet he declares He will then say,  
*I know you not, depart from me, ye Workers  
 of Iniquity.* Matt. vii. 22. In the Parable of  
 the Tares growing up with the Wheat, (by  
 which must be meant unfruitful Professors of  
 his Gospel) the Tares are ordered at last to be  
*gathered for burning.* Matt. xiii. 30. And  
 at the 41. and 42. Verses, they which do  
 Iniquity are to be *gathered out of his King-  
 dom* (to which they professed themselves to  
 belong;) and to be cast into a Furnace of  
 Fire: *there shall be wailing and gnashing of  
 Teeth.* The Angels are to *sever the Wick-  
 ed from the Just*, and to *cast the Wicked in-  
 to the Furnace of Fire.* v. 47. The Man in  
 the Parable, found *without a Wedding Gar-  
 ment*, Matt. xxii. 13. and the *unprofitable  
 Servant*, who had not improved the *Talent*  
 entrusted to him, that is, the Light, and  
 Strength afforded him in the Gospel, Matt.  
 xxv. 30. are both ordered to be cast into  
*outer Darkness, there shall be wailing, and  
 gnashing of Teeth.*

I THOUGHT



I THOUGHT it fitting to make this Mat- S E R M.  
 ter so exceeding evident, that there might IV.  
 remain no Doubt of it : and these Texts are  
 so plain, that there can be no Thought of  
 mistaking their Meaning ; tho' they be not so  
 many in Number as might easily be alleged  
 from the same Sacred Writings. And can  
 any Christians hear all this, and not argue  
 certainly from hence, that there is a Necessi-  
 ty of forsaking their Sins, in order to any  
 Hopes of Pardon and Acceptance at last ? For,  
 if it were the Design of the Gospel to teach,  
 and influence Men to *deny all Ungodliness*;  
 if *Christians* be commanded, upon Pain of  
 God's Eternal Displeasure, to forsake all Sin ;  
 if it be declared, both by *Christ* and his *A-*  
*postles*, that all *Workers of Iniquity* shall cer-  
 tainly be excluded the *Kingdom of Heaven* :  
 then it is most evident, that unless they for-  
 sake their Sins, and are changed from being  
 Workers of Iniquity, they are not truly, and  
 fully, *Christians* ; nor shall ever be admitted  
 to the Favour of God, or the Rewards of  
 Heaven.

FROM hence therefore appears most evi-  
 dently the Truth of the *first* Proposition, viz.  
 That it is required, in the Gospel-Dispensa-  
 tion,

S E R M. tion, of every *Christian*, who hath been, in  
 IV. any sort, or any Degree, a *wilful Sinner*,  
 that He renounce and forsake his Sins. Let  
 us now proceed to the *second*; which will  
 still more confirm the Truth of the *first*: viz.

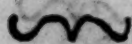
II. I T is required likewise of Him, that  
 He sincerely, and with Perseverance, prac-  
 tise Holiness, and Virtue.

T H I S is almost always, in the *New Testa-  
 ment*, joined to the forsaking of Sin. The  
*Grace of God* is declared to have appeared,  
 in the Gospel-Dispensation, teaching Men,  
 not only to deny *Ungodliness and worldly  
 Lusts*, but also to live *soberly, righteously,  
 and godly in this World*. Tit. ii. 12, 13. And  
 at the 14<sup>th</sup> v. Christ is said to have given  
 himself for us, not only to redeem us from  
 all Iniquity, but to purify to himself a pe-  
 culiar People zealous of good Works. Agree-  
 ably to this, Christians are commanded not  
 only to abhor that which is evil, but also to  
 cleave to that which is good, Rom. xii. 9.  
 not only to cleanse themselves from all  
 Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, but also to  
 perfect Holiness in the Fear of God, 2 Cor.  
 vii. 1. They are told, that there is but one  
 way of running in the *Christian Race*, so as

to obtain the Prize, 1 Cor. x. 24 ; that no-  
thing avails in *Christ Jesus*, that is, in the  
Christian Dispensation, but a *New Creature*,  
or an Alteration of every thing that is bad,  
*Gal. vi. 15* ; or, in other Words, that no-  
thing avails, but *Faith which worketh by*  
*Love*, ch. v. 6. They are assured that *Faith*,  
or their believing in *Christ Jesus*, is made  
*perfect by good Works* ; and is *dead without*  
them, and of no account before God. *Jam.*  
*ii. 26* ; that *whosoever shall keep* all other  
parts of *God's Law*, and wilfully and habitu-  
ally offend in one Point, is *guilty of all*, v.  
*10* ; that *without Holiness no Man shall see*  
*the Lord*. *Heb. xii. 14*. And indeed a great  
part of *St. Paul's Epistles* is generally spent  
in inculcating the Moral Precepts of Reli-  
gion. It is for *them* only, who, by *patient*  
*continuance in well-doing*, seek for *Glory*  
and *Immortality*, that *Eternal Life* is reser-  
ved. *Rom. ii. 7*. Nay, it is declared to be so  
far from being an Advantage to a wicked  
Man, that he professeth *Christianity*, that it  
had been better for such an one not to have  
known the way of *Righteousness*. *2 Pet. ii.*  
*21*. As our Lord himself saith, *The Servant*  
*who knew his Master's Will, and did it not,*

SER. M. *shall be beaten with many Stripes.* Luke

IV. xii. 47.



I MIGHT multiply plain, unexceptionable Passages, without Number, declaring that the Rewards of God belong only to *Righteousness*; that Christians are *called to Holiness*; that unless they *sow to the Spirit*, and *bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit*, they must not expect *Life everlasting*; that, according to what they have done in this Life, so shall be their Doom: and the like. But they would all, as indeed they are, be only Repetitions, and Enforcements of that most plain and express Declaration of our Lord himself, who best knew the *Terms* of that *Acceptance*, which He himself purchased; viz. Matt. vii. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven:* which utterly precludes all professed Christians from any Benefit from their Religion, unless they conscientiously practise that good, and perfect Will of God, which they know to contain their Duty.

AND this being the declared Nature and Design of the Gospel; this being thus evidently

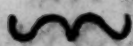


dently required of Christians, as necessary to S E R M.  
 Salvation, in many plain Passages, uncapa- IV.  
 ble of any other Sense: no Christian can  
 think any thing of Force enough to induce  
 him to doubt of the *Truth* of what I have  
 now laid down in the *Two first Propositions*,  
*viz.* that it is absolutely necessary for any  
 Christian, who hath been in any respect a  
*wilful Sinner*, in order to his Acceptance,  
 and Eternal Happiness, to forsake his Sins;  
 and with Perseverance to practise all Virtue  
 and Holiness, whilst He hath Opportunity  
 allowed him: and that unless He do this so  
 as to make it his own voluntary Act and  
 Deed, (which must be before a *Death-bed*  
 makes it impossible;) and so, as to be deser-  
 vedly denominated, *holy, righteous, spiri-*  
*tual*, and the like; He cannot have a *Title*  
 to those Rewards, which in the Gospel are  
 promised to none but such as are truly so.

AND thus having established the *Truth*  
 of these *Two first Propositions*, upon such  
*plain Texts* as cannot be shaken by any thing  
 dubious, or obscure; I proceed

2. S E C O N D L Y, to consider, as I propo-  
 sed, those Marks of Justice, Reason, and  
 Wisdom, which we our selves may see to be-  
 long

SERM. long to these *Two Terms* of the Covenant  
IV. of *Grace*, thus explained.

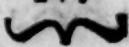


AND here I think I may affirm, That, supposing the Nature of *Almighty God* to be such as it is; at an infinite Distance from all Sin and Iniquity, as well as kindly and tenderly disposed towards his rational Creatures; we cannot imagine any possible Conditions of the *Acceptance* of *Sinners* to his Favour, so free from all Exception, as those now laid down in the Two foregoing Propositions. For if God will at all accept Sinners to Mercy for the Sake of *Jesus Christ*; it must be supposed, either, 1. That He will accept them, for *his* Sake, let their inward Sentiments, and their outward Behaviour, continue what they please; that is, that He requires nothing at all on their part towards it: Or, 2. That He will, for the Sake of *Jesus Christ*, accept them, without any Alteration in their outward Conduct and Behaviour; provided they do but conceive and express a great Sorrow and Concern that they have transgressed his Laws: Or, 3. That He will, for the sake of Christ, *once* pardon to them all their former Transgressions; or that he will forgive such a particular Number of Transgressions;

Transgressions ; after which the Sinner SERM.  
IV.  
should have no Hope of Pardon, if He should  
relapse into the Commission of any *wilful*  
*Sin* : or else, 4. and lastly, That, for the  
sake of *Jesus Christ*, the Sinner shall be par-  
doned who doth, at any time, so forsake his  
Sins, as to bring forth, in the whole Course  
and Tenour of his Life, the contrary Virtues,  
and do the whole Will of God. These are  
all the *Suppositions* that, I believe, can be  
thought of, concerning the *Terms of Accept-*  
*tance* of any who have been *wilful Sinners*.  
Now,

I. LET us examine the first *Supposition*,  
which puts the Case, as if it were declared  
that *Sinners* should be accepted, for the sake  
of *Christ*, whether they regarded his Laws,  
or not ; whether they altered their Notions,  
and Behaviour, or not. And what can we  
imagine a greater Repugnancy to all those  
Conceptions we have of the holy Nature of  
God, and of the great Law of Reason, and  
uncorrupted Nature ? For what plainer De-  
claration could Almighty God make, to lead  
Men to think that there was no Difference  
between *Moral Good* and *Moral Evil* ; that  
*Virtue* was of no account in his Eyes ; and  
that

SERM. that the Distinction between *that* and *Vice*,  
 IV. was not worthy to be regarded by rational  
 ~~~~~ Creatures? This would be to make this  
 World an Hell of Wickedness and Misery;
 and Heaven, at last, the Attendant upon *Vice*,
 which would by this means prevail over the
 Face of the Earth, and not upon *Virtue*,
 which would by this means cease from
 amongst the Children of Men. This is to
 suppose *Almighty God* descending in Offers
 of Mercy, in order to encourage Men, in-
 deed, to *continue in Sin*; and causing his
 Son to be born into the World, I will not
 say, to no Purpose, but to the worst of all
 Purposes, *that is*, to the utter Confusion,
 and Disgrace of the Cause of Virtue. It is
 to suppose, either that He hath given no Mo-
 ral Laws to be observed, which we know to
 be false; or that He hath left it indifferent
 whether Men will observe them, or no; nay,
 that He hath sent his Son to assure Men that
 this is an indifferent Matter; which is high-
 ly absurd. It is to suppose such an extraordi-
 nary Person coming into the World in so ex-
 traordinary a manner, for nothing but to
 speak Comfort to the worst part of Mankind,
 even whilst they continue the worst; and
 not

not to leave them the least effectual Motive S E R M.
to engage them to make themselves better: IV.
which is the highest Affront we can offer to 
Almighty God; who cannot be supposed,
without the greatest Indignity, to visit his
Creatures after so extraordinary a manner,
in order to carry on a Design opposite to his
own Nature. In fine, it is to suppose the
Cause of Virtue left entirely unguarded; and
the main Encouragements of the Gospel to
lie on the side of Vice: which having the
Inclinations and Customs of most Men on its
side, wants nothing but such a collateral As-
sistance as this, to enable it to overwhelm
the World with an irresistible Torrent.

If any ask, Who are they that ever could
think thus of the *Terms of Acceptance* with
God? I may answer, All such as, (tho' they
do not say it, and speak it aloud, in so many
Words, yet,) think and speak, in such a
manner, of the Merits of *Christ's* Sufferings,
and the Imputation of his personal Holiness
to Believers, as to make his *Moral Laws* of
none effect, and to render *all Virtue* in *Chris-*
tians, a poor insignificant, unnecessary Mat-
ter; unless it be the great Virtue of applying
the Merits of *Christ* to our selves: a Virtue,
which

SERM.
IV.



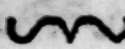
which *They* who have most Spirits, are the most frequently observed to be Masters of; and which hath been too often seen to be founded upon the greatest degree of *Confidence*, and the greatest degree of *Guilt*, mix'd and temper'd together by a strong Fancy, and Imagination. And would not this be the greatest Reflexion upon Almighty God, to imagine that He should propose the *Kingdom of Heaven* to suffer such *Violence*; not to be *taken* by the *Force* of an holy and exemplary Life, but by the *Force* of a groundless Assurance, and a confident Application of his Promises?

2. IF this be not a tolerable Supposition, let us examine the next Supposition I spake of, concerning the *Terms of Acceptance*; viz. That all manner of past Sins shall be wholly pardoned for the sake of Jesus Christ, provided that the Sinner do sometimes, and especially in his last Moments, conceive and express a very great Sorrow, and deep Concern for them. And here, let any one of the meanest Capacity judge, whether this be a tolerable Supposition concerning Almighty God, that He requires our Grief, or our Sorrow, for the sake of it self, whilst nothing

thing good results from it : which is an Absurdity plainly implied in this Imagination. For all Sorrow is, for the present, Misery and Uneasiness, in its own Nature : and Almighty God cannot, in a State of Trial, be supposed to require, or expect, the least Uneasiness in his Creatures, considered as Uneasiness ; but merely with respect to their better State, and greater Happiness for the Time to come. Nor doth He ever require our Sorrow, but as the beginning of Amendment, and the first Step to Reformation. But of this I shall have occasion to speak more largely, under the *Second Branch* of my present Design : when I come to examine more at length the false Hopes, and dangerous Mistakes of Men, in this Affair. I shall only therefore at present observe farther, that the Supposition we are now considering, is encompassed with the same insuperable Absurdities, under which the former laboured : viz. That Christ Jesus descended from Heaven to teach Men to grieve, and shed Tears ; that He hath left Virtue unaccompanied with Encouragements, and hath bestowed his Favours upon that which is not so much as the Shadow of Virtue ; upon a Practice

SERM.
IV.

S E R M. Practice depending more upon a peculiar

IV.  Temper and Constitution of Body, than upon any thing truly good and virtuous in the Mind. It is to suppose *Almighty God* to accept, instead of Service, what no Father, no Master upon Earth, would accept; and, in one Word, it is to suppose God himself to invalidate and render vain, every Precept of Virtue, and every Moral Law, from one End of the *New Testament* to the other: which who can believe, unless one that can believe any thing of the Judge of the whole Earth? Let us therefore,

3. EXAMINE the *Third Supposition*, viz. That Almighty God declares He is willing to pardon a Sinner just to such a particular Term of Life, or such a particular Number of Sins: but that if, after that, He shall sin wilfully; He shall be absolutely unpardonable. This looks like a very great Discouragement to Sin: but yet at the End inevitably leads to it. For what would be the Issue, suppose any one, after his final Pardon, should through the Violence of a Temptation, be ensnared into a wilful Sin? What would He think within himself, when He was once sure that He was in a desperate Condition?

Condition? Would He not certainly find a S E R M. IV.
sort of a present Refuge, in being more re-
solute than ever in his wicked Courses, since
He could hope for no Good in breaking
them off? Considering, therefore, the pre-
sent Frailty and Weakness of Man, this
would be a vast Disadvantage, in the End,
to the Cause of Holiness and Virtue. For
the promising Pardon to such a particular
Number of Transgressions, or to a Course
of Sin of such a particular Duration, would
almost fatally influence Men, who were not
of a sort of Angelical Nature, to venture so
far in some Instance or other, without Fear,
or Suspicion of Danger: and all that Time
the Cause of Vice would be wholly unre-
strained. And then their own Weakness,
and the Strength of their evil Habits, would,
without all doubt, in some Case or other,
carry them so much farther, as that they
must come to an hopeless State: and that
State of Despair of future Mercy must make
them violent and resolved in their Wicked-
ness. Thus we see that even this Supposi-
tion, which seems to take most Care of the
Cause of Virtue, leaves it, not only in a na-
ked,

G

SERM. ked, and unguarded, but in a very desperate
IV. Condition.

W NAY, let us suppose that it was declared only in general, that there was a certain Number of Sins, or a certain Period of Time, beyond which God would not pardon; and not any particular Number, or Time, specified to the World: yet still most Men, it is too justly to be feared, would first be led by *Hope* to commit many Sins with a flattering Persuasion that they should not come up to that *Number*, or arrive at that *Period*; and then, when the Habit was become strong, would be fixed by *Despair* in this Opinion, that being probably got past that Number, and Period, they had e'en as good continue in their Sins, as their Inclination powerfully directs them.

T H U S it appears that we our selves can discover great and considerable Inconveniences in any other Proposal of *Terms* of *Reconciliation* between God, and Sinners, except that which I mentioned in the last place, and have before proved to be the *Truth* of the Matter; viz.

4. T H A T, for the sake of *Jesus Christ*, the Sinner shall be pardoned, who doth, at

any time, so forsake his Sins, as to bring SERM.
forth, in the Course and Tenour of his Life, IV.
the contrary Virtues, and sincerely perform
the whole Will of God. In which Proposal,
you may see, that when it is said that all *wilful Sinners*, amending their Lives, shall be accepted, there is all the Encouragement possible given to the Practice of Virtue, without making its Cause desperate, even to those who have very much neglected it for the Time past: and that when it is said that no *wilful Sinners*, without such actual Amendment of their Ways, shall be accepted, there is all the Discouragement given to Vice that can be, without throwing the Sinner into such a desperate Condition, as to tempt him to have recourse to his very Sins for Comfort.

I AM not unsensible that there is this Inconvenience attending the Promulgation of Pardon and Favour, even upon these Terms; viz. That Men of evil Dispositions, and strong Propensions to Sin, but yet not void of all regard to future Happiness, are led from hence to the basest Return to so much Mercy; to imagine, because all *wilful Sinners* are pardonable upon these Conditions, that therefore all is well, if one time or other
G 2 of Acceptance they

S E R M. they take care to come up to them: and so,
 IV.  with the Possibility of this, they rather encourage themselves to go on for the present in the Commission of Sin, than immediately to forsake it. We find that there were some such ungrateful Persons, in the very first Ages of the *Gospel*, who basely encouraged themselves to continue in their Sins, as if it would magnify the Honour of God's Favour, to have more to pardon than they had already committed. *St. Paul* speaks with the utmost Abhorrence of this way of arguing, *Rom. vi. 1. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in Sin that Grace may abound?* That is, in order to give the Mercy of God an Opportunity of shewing it self yet more? *God forbid!* God forbid, indeed, that any should be of so unworthy a Temper, as wilfully before-hand to encourage themselves to affront their Maker, because He hath been so merciful, beyond their Deservings, as to declare that He will accept them whenever they truly turn to him.

I M E N T I O N not this, in order to argue at this time with such Persons as these, who seem to be in the very next Degree to desperate and unpardonable; (which one would think

think sufficient to allarm any Men in their SENSES;) but in order to obviate an Objection which may arise from the seeming Imprudence of openly proposing Favour upon such Conditions, *viz.* That wicked Men may be led to abuse them to other Purposes, and to their own Destruction: In order, I say, to obviate such an Objection by observing that nothing of this Nature can be framed, but what they may so abuse; that it is fit and reasonable that, in so great a Matter, something should be left to the Application of Men themselves, and to the Sincerity of their own Minds; and therefore that this rather shews the Wisdom of the Dispensation than destroys it; that if our Gospel be ineffectual on this Account, it is so only to *those who are lost*, that is, to Men lost to all Sense of *Virtue*, or common Gratitude; lost to all that is good and tolerable, and totally given up to worldly or bestial Enjoyments; and that Men of such Tempers deserve to fall into such a Snare, and appear resolved upon Sin, whatever *Terms of Acceptance* could have been offered them. Notwithstanding therefore, that this Inconvenience may attend this peculiar Method of *Acceptance*:

SERM.
IV.

SERM. yet since it is excellently fitted for the Hap-
 IV. pinefs of all who are truly honeft and fincere;
 since it hath been fhewn that much greater
 Inconveniencies muft attend all others that
 can well be thought of; and it is plain that
this arifeth from an invincible Perverfity of
 Mind; this is fufficient to juftify the excel-
 lent Contrivance of this Method, above all
 others. For infinite Wifdom itfelf can do
 no more than chufe that particular Method
 which is the beft of all that are poffible;
 and hath the feweft real Inconveniencies at-
 tending it; and is moft agreeable to the Na-
 ture of God, the Condition of Man, and
 the *End* propofed in it.

I SHALL only add that, from what hath
 been faid, we may learn to adore the Good-
 nefs of God in condefcending to grant any
Terms to wilful Sinners; and to admire his
 Wifdom, in doing this after fuch a manner
 as at once to fhew the ftricteft Regard to *Vir-
 tue*; and the tendereft Compaffion to his
 Creatures that have erred from the Paths of
 it. And God grant that we may be of the
 Number of thofe happy Chriftians, who em-
 brace thefe Terms, and, upon them only, feek
 for Happinefs and Eternal Life! Amen!

S E R-



Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

S E R M O N V.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th Verse.

Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal Life ?



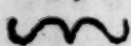
IN answer to the *Enquiry* which S E R M. I proposed from these Words, V. viz. What it is that is required in the Gospel, of a *Christian*, who hath been in any sort, or degree, a wilful Sinner, in order to his Acquittance, and Eternal Happiness, thro' *Jesus Christ*; I laid down the *four* following Propositions.

I. I T is required of such an one, that He renounce and forsake his Sins.

II. I T is required that He sincerely, and with Perseverance, practise Holiness, and Virtue.

SERM.

V.



III. IN order to his Acceptance, it is required not only that he forsake his own Sins, and amend his Life in other Instances; but likewise that He entirely forgive the Offences and Trespasses of others against himself. And,

IV. IN the Case of *Injustice*, it is not sufficient that the Sinner leaves off Injustice for the future, so far as to do Wrong to no more Persons than those He hath already injured: but He must also, as ever he hopes for Mercy and Acceptance with God, make Restitution of what He hath at any time wronged any one of; and all possible Reparation for the Injuries which he hath heretofore been guilty of.

THE *Two first* of these I considered in my last Discourse, *first*, shewing the *Truth* of them from plain, unexceptionable *Texts* of the *New Testament*, incapable of any other Meaning; and *secondly*, the Reasonableness, and Fitness of the *Terms* of Salvation laid down in them, considering the Nature of *God* and *Man*, above any other, which we could possibly suppose. I come now to consider the *Third* Proposition laid down, *viz.*

III. THAT

III. THAT it is required of a *Christian*, SERM. V.
 who hath been a *wilful Sinner*, not only to
 forsake his own Sins, and amend his Life;
 but likewise entirely to forgive the Offen-
 ses, and Trespases of others, against him-
 self.

THIS *Condition of Acceptance*, as I
 hinted to you once before, might justly have
 been reduced to the Two foregoing *Propo-*
sitions: because, Forgiveness being a part of
 Evangelical Duty, and Implacability and Re-
 venge sinful and criminal in their own Na-
 tures, it is impossible that a Man should for-
 sake his Sins, which, according to the *first*
Proposition, is absolutely required, without
 forsaking his Resolutions, and Disposition
 to Revenge, and Retaliation; or that He
 should practise all Holiness and Virtue, ac-
 cording to the *Second Proposition*, without
 practising Forgiveness, and demonstrating
 himself to be of a yielding and placable Tem-
 per. But since the Evidence of this Virtue
 hath been so much over-clouded by the Pas-
 sions of Men; nay, since it hath passed, in
 many Cases, almost for a Vice; since our
 Lord, and his Apostles, added to their gene-
 ral Exhortations concerning Repentance,
 and

S E R M. and Amendment, the most particular Injunctions about this Point ; since, even under the
 V.  Light of the Gospel there are too many, who will hardly be persuaded to put their high Resentments, and Purposes of Retaliation, amongst their Vices, which they are obliged, upon Pain of Damnation, to relinquish, and forsake ; and *lastly*, since there is so much said in the *Gospel* of the peculiar Necessity of this forgiving Temper towards our own Forgiveness, and of its peculiar Efficacy towards our Justification, it very deservedly claims a particular Place in our Consideration, when we are enquiring after the *Terms* of our Eternal Happiness : as will appear, I do not doubt, from what I have to offer concerning it. And for your Satisfaction in this Instance, I propose,

1. T O shew you, from the plainest Passages of the *New Testament*, that this Forgiveness of others is indispensably required at our Hands, in order to our own Forgiveness.

2. T O prevent Mistakes, I design to shew you the true Meaning of what is declared in any of these Texts concerning the peculiar Efficacy

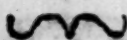
Efficacy of this Virtue upon Almighty God SERM.
V.
towards our Acceptance with him. And,

3. I SHALL shew you the great Reasonableness, and Fitness, of God's requiring this of us; and of our practising it, in its utmost Extent, and Comprehension.

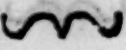
1. I SAY, I design to prove the Truth of the Proposition laid down; and to shew you that the Forgiveness of the Offenses and Trespases of others against our selves is indispensably required at our Hands, in order to our own Forgiveness, and Justification.

THE first Proof we meet with of this, is in the Sixth Chapter of St. *Matthew*, part of that Divine Discourse upon the Mount, in which our Lord designed to let his Disciples into the Knowledge of the Nature of his Blessings, and of his Doctrine. At the 7th Verse we find him teaching them a most comprehensive *Form of Prayer*: one Petition of which, v. 12. is this, *Forgive us our Debts, as we forgive our Debtors*. The *Debts*, by which we have become obnoxious to Almighty God, are our Sins, and Offenses against his Law. Accordingly, in St. *Luke*, this Petition is expressed thus, *ch. xi. v. 4. Forgive us our Sins: for we also forgive every*

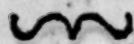
S E R M. *very one that is indebted to us.* This is the

V.  greatest Proof our blessed Lord could have given of the Importance, and Necessity, of this forgiving Temper in us; that He hath put it into this very short Form, in which He could not express all Things particularly; and commanded his Disciples to ask Forgiveness of God on no other Terms, but their forgiving the Offenses of others against themselves. Forgive us, as we forgive others; *i. e.* as far as we do the same to our Fellow-Creatures; and no farther; or, as it is in *St. Luke*, Forgive us, for we forgive all others: as if we ought not to approach God, and could not, upon the Gospel-Covenant, apply to Him for Forgiveness, unless at the same time we could appeal to our own Hearts, and declare that we were entirely disposed to forgive all others.

B U T because this was, to the corrupted State of Mankind, a new Doctrine, tho' eternally reasonable, and good; our Lord, for the farther Declaration and Explication of his Mind, *Matth. vi. 14, 15.* immediately adds the following Words, *For if ye forgive Men their Trespases* (that is the meaning of *Debts*, ver. 12.) *your Heavenly Father will*

will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not S E R M.
Men their Trespases; neither will your Fa- V.
ther forgive your Trespases. As if He had 
 said, Be not surprized that I put such a Peti-
 tion into the *Prayer*, which I have recom-
 mended to you; so seemingly new, upon the
 Principles commonly received in the World:
 for I tell you that this is one main part of my
 Doctrine, and one great Condition of that
 Forgiveness, which I am to preach, and
 which Sinners are seeking after, that ye for-
 give one another; and that without it God
 will never forgive you. Agreeably to this,
Mark xi. 25, 26, He tells his Disciples plainly,
that this Forgiveness is so necessary and requi-
sitate, that they had as good not pray to God
for Forgiveness at all, as to pray to him with-
out this forgiving Disposition. And when ye
stand praying, (or, when ye are praying to
God) forgive if ye have ought against any:
that your Father which is in Heaven may
forgive you your Trespases. But if ye do not
forgive, neither will your Father which is
in Heaven forgive your Trespases. It is in
vain for you to expect; it is impudent for
you to ask, of God, Forgiveness on your own
 Behalf;

S E R M. Behalf ; if you refuse to entertain this forgiving Temper with respect to others.

V.


THE same thing, thus plainly expressed, is very significantly set forth, *Matth. xviii. 23.* in the *Parable* of a *Servant*, or *Slave*, who owed his Master *Ten Thousand Talents*, which his Master, upon his earnest Request, forgave him. But *He*, little moved with the *Compassion* of his Master, went and found one of his *Fellow-Servants*, who owed him an *hundred Pence* : whom, notwithstanding all his *Entreaties*, He cast into *Prison*, and reduced to extreme *Misery*, on this Account. But when his Lord heard it, He did not reckon that it was fit to let his former *Forgiveness* stand good : but gave him up to *Misery*, and *Punishment*, till He could satisfy for his old *Debt*. Of which, for fear *Christians* should not willingly make the *Application* themselves, our *Lord* doth it in plain Words, *ver. 35.* *So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye, from your Hearts, forgive not, every one his Brother their Trespases* : that is, He shall rigorously exact of us a due *Satisfaction*, and *Punishment* for every *Sin* we have been guilty of towards him ; if we be so rigorous as

to take Vengeance of our Fellow-Creatures S E R M.
 for the Offenses they have been guilty of to- V.
 wards our selves. This *Parable*, concerning
 an unconfined Forgiveness, was spoken, up-
 on occasion of St. *Peter's* Question to our
 Lord, v. 21. He had naturally a great deal
 of Warmth in his Temper, and an abun-
 dance of Heat and Passion, before the Chri-
 stian Spirit had quelled, and tamed it. This
 Temper made him willing to hope that, if
 any Forgiveness was necessary, yet perhaps
 not a Forgiveness unlimited, and unrestrain-
 ed; but only a Forgiveness of so many par-
 ticular Affronts, or Injuries, after which Re-
 venge, (for the Sweetness of which some Men
 would even be content with receiving Inju-
 ries) might again become lawful. *Then came*
Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall
my Brother sin against me, and I forgive
him? Till seven Times? He was willing,
 you see, to allow what we esteem a good
 Number of Affronts, provided there might
 be any Hope left of coming afterwards to
 Revenge again. But *Jesus* saith unto him, v.
 22. *I say not unto thee, until seven times,*
but until seventy times seven: which An-
 swer, according to the usual way of speaking,
 (i. e.

SER M. (i. e. putting a definite large Number for an
 V. indefinite one) manifestly was designed to
 teach him, and, in him, all Men of the like
 natural Heat and Fire, that his Doctrine was
 not designed to fix any Bounds to Forgiveness;
 but that, as we must have Forgiveness at the
 Hands of God, not for *Seven Offenses*, but for
Seventy times Seven; not for any particular
 Number of our Sins, but for all, without
 Exception, before we can be happy; so, we
 must forgive our Fellow-Creatures, not *Seven
 times only*, but *Seventy times Seven*, if there
 be occasion; even all, and every of their
 Offenses against us.

THE same thing, in the 17th Chapter of
 St. *Luke*, v. 4. is expressed by our Brother's
 sinning against us *Seven times in one Day*;
 where that Number is put for an indefinite
 Number, because it is not well possible to
 suppose that any one should be guilty, in
 one Day, of so many Injuries towards
 another, as *Seven*. *If He trespass against
 thee seven times in a Day, and seven times
 in a Day turn again to thee, saying, I re-
 pent; thou shalt forgive him*. Here indeed
 it is put upon the injurious Man's re-
 penting; and coming to us; and begging
 Pardon

Pardon; and declaring his Sense of his Crime. But it is manifest that we are required to forgive not only when He doth this; but likewise when He doth not: because, as I have before observed, we are not to beg Pardon of God any farther than we pardon others; and we are never to pray for Forgiveness, without declaring that we do forgive others; or without feeling within our selves that we have the Disposition and Resolution to do it. The same St. *Luke*, ch. vi. v. 7. records these plain Words of our Lord, *Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven*; and v. 38. *For with the same Measure that ye mete (or measure) withal, it shall be measured to you again*: that is, if ye do not forgive others, but are rigorous upon them; Almighty God will certainly be as rigorous upon you, in the requiring Satisfaction and Punishment for every Sin that you have at any time committed against him.

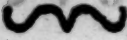
AGREEABLY to this plain Doctrine of their Master, the *Apostles* preached the same universal Love, and unconfined Spirit of Forgiveness. St. *Paul* calls upon the *Romans* to lay aside all Thoughts of Revenge, upon any Provocation, or Injury. *Ch. xii. v. 19.*

H

Dearly

S E R M.
V.



SERM. Dearly Beloved, *avenge not your selves.*
 V. And v. 21. *Be not overcome of Evil, so far*

as to return, and retaliate, Injuries; but overcome Evil, by returning Good for it: which cannot be done without a forgiving Temper. I omitt many such like Passages in the Gospels, against Revenge, and Retaliation; because I would confine my self to those Texts which expresly touch the Point in hand. The same St. Paul calls upon the Epheſians, Be ye kind, one to another; tender-hearted; forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you. ch. iv. 32. And addreſſes himſelf to the Coloſſians, ch. iii. v. 12, 13. after this pathetical manner. Put on therefore, as the Elect of God, holy and beloved, (for ſo Chriſtians are called in the New Teſtament,) Bowels of Mercies, Kindneſs, Long-ſuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any Man have a Quarrel againſt any: even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do ye. I have now ſaid what is fully ſufficient to ſatiſfy you that this Forgiveneſs of others is indiſpenſably required at our Hands, in order to our own Forgiveneſs; and that
 without

without this we ought not so much as to ask SERM.
V.
Forgiveness of God. I shall now

2. JUST observe to you the true Meaning of what is declared concerning the Efficacy of this *Forgiveness* of others, upon Almighty God, towards our own Forgiveness, and Acceptance; which is in short this, That, without this Forgiveness of others on our part, He will never finally acquit us from the Guilt of any of our Sins: that it is not sufficient for any Sinner to forsake his Drunkenness, or Uncleaness, or Swearing, or any other Vice; but He must likewise forgive others their Trespases and Injuries against himself; and that otherwise, God will be as severe upon him, and require an Account of every Sin, which he hath at any time been guilty of, through his whole life.

I HAVE before shewn you, from the plainest Texts, that it is absolutely required that Men forsake all other Vices; and become holy, and virtuous, in order to their final Pardon, and Happiness. It is impossible therefore, that what is said concerning the Efficacy of this Forgiveness of others, should invalidate what is said of the Necessity of a good Life in other Respects. I have

S E R M. now shewn you that it is as plainly said as
 V. Words can express it, that if we forgive, we
 shall be forgiven. The Meaning therefore, can be only this, that those Sins which we have forsaken, and utterly renounced, shall be forgiven to us; if we will forgive those Sins which others have committed against us: But if we will not, that our Heavenly Father will upon no Terms forgive us our past Sins; not even tho' we have forsaken them. Thus, you see the several Passages about these distinct *Terms* are very easily reconcileable. God will not forgive us, and make us happy, unless we forsake our own Sins: nor will He then forgive us, unless to this Amendment, in other Instances, we add a placable forgiving Temper with respect to Neighbours; and readily and heartily remit to our Fellow-Creatures, so as not to take Vengeance on them, their Offences against ourselves. This I just take notice of here: but I shall have another Opportunity distinctly and fully to handle it, when I come, in due Place and Time, to examine those Pretences which Men have built upon mistaken and misapplied Texts of Scripture: amongst which will come in the Pretence of Men, to

get rid of the Necessity of a good Life in o- SERM.
ther respects, founded upon the Promise of V.
God made to this Forgiveness of other Men's
Trespases, taken distinctly by itself, and se-
parated from the other Rules of the Gospel.

3. I PROPOSED, in the third place, to
shew you the great Reasonableness, and Fit-
ness, that this forgiving Disposition should
be required by God, and heartily practised
by us; as it hath been now explained. A ve-
ry few Words will satisfy us of this: for,

1. IF *this* were so required, as to stand
in the stead of other Duties, and atone for
the continued Neglect of them: then fare-
wel all Hopes of any Virtue, except this, in
the World: of which I cannot determine,
whether it would then be a Virtue, or no. In
vain are all the Promises of God made to
Righteousness; in vain are all his Terrors
displayed against all manner of Sin; in vain
are all the Moral Precepts inculcated from the
beginning to the end of the *New Testament*;
if this single Virtue may at last make Atone-
ment for a Life of wilful, and habitual Sin.
This shews us the Unreasonableness of sup-
posing that God can attribute such an Efficacy
to this, as to make all his other Laws en-
tirely

S E R M. tirely of none Effect ; and to give a Loose to
 V. almost all manner of Vice, and Wickedness
 in the World. Nor could any thing be a
 greater Encouragement particularly to the
 mutual doing of Injuries, than this. It is high-
 ly reasonable, therefore, that this *Forgive-
 ness* should be required, and favoured, no o-
 therwise than as in Conjunction with all o-
 ther Virtues. And,

2. T H E R E cannot be a more equitable
 and unexceptionable Condition, proposed to
 us than this, that we should not expect that
 Mercy at the Hands of God, which we will
 not shew to our Fellow-Creatures. Who that
 considers the Obligations He hath received
 from *Almighty God* ; the infinite Distance
 between Him and his Creatures ; the Guilt
 and Heinousness of the least Sin, and the
 least Neglect, where so much is, on so many
 Accounts, owing : Who that hath common
 Modesty, or the least degree of Considerati-
 on, would not think it fit, to forgive the
 greatest Offences of others against himself,
 (little and inconsiderable, in comparison of
 the least Offences of a Creature against God,)
 and even voluntarily to do this, in order to
 dispose his Judge to be merciful to him? Or,

can

can any one think it proper to come into the SERM.
V.
Presence of God, and ask or expect Pardon
for his own Sins; and in the same Breath to
tell *Almighty God*, He never can forgive his
Brother? *Forgive us our Trespases*, O Lord;
tho' we never will forgive those committed
by frail Men against our selves. Thus doth
every one in effect pray, who comes before
God, with an Heart full of Revenge and
Retaliation; or void of Forgiveness, and
Mercy. And how absurd this is, I need not
say. Would any Earthly *Master*, as our
Lord intimates in the Parable, forgive a Ser-
vant who should openly refuse to forgive his
Fellow-Servant; or remit his Punishment for
Crimes against himself, when he saw him
exercising Barbarity and Cruelty, in reveng-
ing himself upon his Fellow-Servants, for
the least Affronts and Injuries? Nay, what
Servant would not gladly comply, and think
it great Condescension, if his *Master* should
offer him to forgive him all his Debts, or
Offenses, on Condition that He would do
the same, with regard to his poor Fellow-Ser-
vants? And certainly, there can be no Chri-
stian, or Man, of so embittered a Temper,
as not to think this a most reasonable Condi-

SERMON of his own Forgiveness; or to expect
 V. that God should forgive Him, whilst He
 breaths nothing but Revenge, and Punishment, for every Offense of his Fellow-Creatures. But enough of this: I must now speak a little upon the *last* of the *four Propositions* laid down: which is this.

IV. IN the Case of Injustice, it is not sufficient that the Sinner leave off Injustice for the future, so far as not to do the least wrong to any Persons, thro' the remaining part of his life: but He must also, as ever He hopes for Mercy and Acceptance with God, make Restitution of what He hath at any time wronged any one of; and Reparation for the Injuries which He hath at any time heretofore, by Word, or Deed, committed against his Neighbour.

HERE some one may ask, Where is the plain Text of the *New Testament*, which requires this Restitution? To which I answer, that indeed there is none which in so many Words doth say this; but that the reason of this is manifestly because this is a part of *Common Justice*; of the Obligation to which there was ever an open Acknowledgment in all Nations, as of what was no more than one of the lowest Degrees of Virtue. We

have an Instance in the Gospel, I mean that S E R M.
of *Zaccheus*, who, when he once came to V.
think of making his Peace with God, de-
clared openly his Resolution to restore
more than what he had wronged any Man
of, if any such wrong could be proved up-
on him. We have it declared by St. Paul,
that *neither Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Ex-*
tortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.
1 Cor. 6. 10. And Eph. 5. 5. the Covetous
are reckoned up amongst such as have no In-
heritance in the Kingdom of God, and of
Christ. In the Tenth Commandment, re-
cognized and reinforced, in the Gospel, we
are absolutely forbid to covet any thing that
is our Neighbours. Now whoever doth, af-
ter an injurious Acquirement, or indeed an
Acquirement of any sort, detain what He
knows to belong to another, is most certain-
ly a *Thief*, in the Sense of the Word truly
criminal; a *covetous Man* and an *Extortio-*
ner, who flourishes upon the Spoils of his
Neighbour: and therefore must expect to be
excluded the Kingdom of Heaven, as such.
For who is there that can more properly be
said to covet what is his Neighbour's, than
the Man who, by Fraud, or Force, retains
in

S E R M. in his Possession what He knows another to
 V. have a Right to? Common Honesty, and Justice, are what the very Heathens, and even the most Ignorant of them, have ever acknowledged to be Duties. And as surely as the highest Crimes will be punished by Almighty God; so surely the Dishonest, and Unjust, will have a particular Share in his Wrath. The Design of the Gospel was to make *Christians* somewhat more than honest Men: but if They, who have the Light of the Gospel, will not be so much as *good Heathens*, they will be certain to inherit the Punishment of the *worst of Christians*, and of such as have refused to practise the very lowest degree of Virtue.

R E S T I T U T I O N, and Reparation, I say, are Instances of Justice, strictly due. The continued Refusal of them is a continued Act of Injustice; a continued Theft; a continued Extortion; an Habit of the grossest Vice. And consequently, if Injustice it self can never be pardoned, till it be forsaken; this complicated, and continued, wilful Injustice will raise the Account of a Sinner to an unpardonable Heighth. How then can *They* hope for Mercy, who cannot so much as pretend

tend to common Honesty, and Justice; but S E R M.
V.
every Minute of their Lives are treasuring up Wrath, and increasing their first Guilt, by approving their own Injustice; and acting it anew by refusing to undo it by Restitution, and Reparation? Certainly, He that can think to go to Heaven without being an honest Man, and whilst he robs his Neighbour every Moment that He lives without Restitution, must take it to be the Reward of Villany, and the Receptacle of such Knaves as Humane Society would not bear, could they be fairly detected, and prosecuted.

THIS I have said, because many People seem to think *Restitution* to be somewhat distinct from *common Justice*, and *Honesty*: when truly it is only a Branch of it; and the contrary Vice nothing but a complicated *Knavery*, and an Injustice, the Guilt of which increaseth every Moment; and consequently, the Continuance in it, utterly irreconcilable to all Hopes of Happiness, according to the Gospel-Dispensation. I might have added more upon this Head: but it is not my present Design to enter into the Nature of this, or any other, particular Virtue; but only to shew that *this* is indispensably

S E R M. bly required in order to the Justification, and
 V. Happiness, of such *Christians* as have sinned
 against the plain Law of Justice and Honesty.

I HAVE now gone over the *four general Propositions* which I laid down, in answer to the important *Enquiry* after the Way to *Life* and *Eternal Happiness*. We see, from the plainest Proofs, that there remain no Hopes of Acceptance for Sinners, according to the Gospel, unless they forsake their Sins, and practise Virtue; unless they heartily forgive the Trespasses of their Neighbours; and make Restitution of what they have wronged any Man of, according to the utmost of their Power. From hence appear the Vanity and Folly of building any Hopes of Mercy upon any thing besides these, so clearly, as to need no other Proof. But because the Imaginations of Men have been various in framing other Terms of Acceptance; and pressing even the *New Testament* it self into their Service: it is another Branch, therefore, of the Design I have now in View, to examine particularly into their *Pretenſes*; and to endeavour to shew such Persons their miserable Delusion. In the mean time, *If we know these Things; happy only are we if we do them*: Which God grant, &c. S E R-



Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

SERMON VI.

St. JAMES, ii. 10.

*For whosoever shall keep the whole Law,
and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty
of all.*



AVING in several Discourses en-
deavoured plainly and particu-
larly to propose the *Terms*, or

SERM.
VI.

Conditions, on which alone
Christians, who have been, in any sense, or
any degree, *wilful Sinners*, may hope to
be acquitted, justified, accepted, and made
eternally happy, by Almighty God; it may
not be improper now to handle this impor-
tant Subject after a manner, which, tho'
something different, may yet be of farther
use to us in our serious Enquiry after the
Way to Happiness, and Eternal Life. In or-
der

SERM. der to this, I could think of no Passage of

VI.  Scripture, more comprehensive ; or more proper, than this taken out of St. James, in which He declares that *whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all* : and I design, therefore,

I. To explain to you, as well as I can, the true Meaning of the Words.

II. To propose to you the Doctrine plainly taught in them : and to prove the Justice, and Reasonableness of it.

III. To answer some Questions, and Doubts, which may arise upon this Subject. And

IV. To draw such Observations, and Inferences, from the whole, as may be of great use in order to our successful Endeavours after Eternal Life.

I. IT is very proper to explain to you, as well as I can, the true Meaning of this Passage : which, as to the manner of Expression, is not without some Difficulty. And,

I. THE Meaning of it cannot be this, that *whosoever transgresseth in one single Instance*, is as bad a Man ; as great a Sinner ; as guilty an Offender ; as he that transgresseth in every Instance possible : that he who co-
vets

vets his Neighbour's Goods, for Example, is SERM.
as bad a Man, and as great a Sinner, as he VI.
who not only covets his Neighbour's Goods,
but also commits Adultery, Murther, and
Theft; profanes the Name of God; disho-
nours his Father and Mother; and breaks e-
very Law that he can possibly, in Contempt
of God, and his Authority. This cannot be
the meaning of the Passage: because it is ab-
surd, at first hearing, thus to take away all
Distinction between the degrees of Sin, and
Sinners; and to make all Transgressors, tho'
differing in the Instances, and Number, of
their several Transgressions, equal in their
Crimes, and in their Guilt. Nor conse-
quently,

2. CAN it be understood to imply in it,
that God will punish all such Persons equally;
that the Man who offends only in one In-
stance, shall be made equal, in the degree of
Punishment, to him who hath offended in
that, and in many more: because the Pu-
nishment of Offenders is without doubt to
be proportioned to their several Offenses;
and because he who offends in many Cases,
is guilty of a more repeated and settled Con-
tempt of the Authority of the Law-giver,
than

SERM. than the other, and therefore must reasonably expect a greater degree of Punishment,
 VI. But

3. HE who offends against the known Law of God, in any one Instance, may, on other Accounts, tho' not on these above-mentioned, be said to be guilty with respect to all his Laws.

IN the first place, as he sins manifestly against that Divine Authority which enacted that part of the Law which he transgresseth, as well as those others which he thinks fit to observe. For Sin, tho' committed but in one Instance, is a sort of a Denial of that Authority by which it is forbidden; and this, tho' applied by the Sinner himself to one Instance only, yet affects all others; because Almighty God hath the same Authority to command, or forbid one thing, that he hath to command or forbid another. Now if we, by our Practice, deny, in effect, his Right to govern us in one Instance; we do, in effect deny it in all; because He hath as much Right to do it in this, as in others; and no more in others than in this. In this respect therefore, whosoever *offends wilfully in one Point*, may be said to be *guilty of all*; that his wilful

ful offending in this Point, is a Rebellion against the Authority of God: which toucheth all his other Laws, as well as this one which he transgresseth. And thus St. James himself seems to explain his own Meaning, in the Verse immediately following the Text. *For He that said, Do not commit Adultery, said also, Do not kill. If therefore thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a Transgressor of the Law.* As if he had expressed himself thus. The meaning of my charging a Man who sins in one Instance, with being guilty of all, is this, that the same God who forbids the other Sins, forbids this one also. Therefore, if thou dost abstain from the other Sins, and yet wilfully sinnest in this one point; Thou art a Sinner with respect to the other Points as well as this: because God claims no greater Authority in those other Points than He doth in this; and Thou, by wilfully offending in this one Point, callest in question his whole Authority, and the *Validity* of his whole Law, which hath no more to uphold it in other Instances, than what it hath in this which thou neglectest. And this certainly must aggravate and increase the Guilt

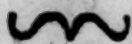
SERM. of one, who wilfully sins in any *one* Instance
 VI. only, that it reflects highly upon the whole
 Law; and that, by calling in question, or
 refusing to obey, the Authority of God in
 this one Point, the Sinner effectually calls
 in question his whole Authority, which is
 just the same with respect to others. In this
 Sense therefore, it may be true, that a Man's
 Guilt will not be proportionable to the
 intrinsic Evil of the single Sin which He in-
 dulgences himself in; but aggravated by confi-
 dering this Sin, as forbidden by the Autho-
 rity of God; and as having a very bad Influ-
 ence upon that Authority in other respects;
 tending as much to weaken and destroy it in
other Instances, as it doth in effect call it in
 question, and condemn it in *this*.

AGAIN, the *Guilt* of a Man who of-
 fends wilfully in *one* Point of God's Law,
 must likewise be supposed to extend, in some
 degree, to all the rest, because it is certain
 that the same Disposition of Mind which en-
 gageth, or permits, him to transgress one
 Law, when Inclination or Interest, Plea-
 sure or Profit, invite him, would likewise
 prevail with him to transgress any of the o-
 thers likewise, supposing him under the In-
 fluence

fluence of the same Inclination or Interest, SERM.
 Pleasure or Profit. For the Occasion of his VI.
 wilful Commission of *one* Sin, is that He hath
 some Temptation to it, which He has shewn
 to be too hard for his Faith, and his Sense
 of God's Authority, to conquer. If there-
 fore, he had the same Temptation to ano-
 ther Vice; if it were accompanied with the
 same Circumstances, equally grateful to his
 Sensuality, or Covetousness, or Ambition;
 is it not plain that He would equally permit
 himself to be carried away with the Tempta-
 tion to it? So that his Innocence in other
 Respects is not owing to his Virtue, or Faith,
 or Sense of God's Authority; but to Necessi-
 ty; to his want of the same Inclination,
 and the same Temptation to these, which
 He hath, with respect to that which He wil-
 fully commits. For if he had that Faith,
 or Sense of God's Authority, which is suffi-
 cient to set him above the same degree of
 Temptation to other Vices; this would as
 certainly set him above the Power of the
 Temptation He hath to this one. And conse-
 quently, He must be guilty, in some degree,
 with respect to all: because He is so dispo-
 sed, as that his Religion, were it to under-

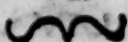
S E R M.

VI.



go an equal Tryal in other Respects, would most certainly yield to it in them, as it doth in this Instance, in which it pleaseth God in a particular manner to try his Faith, and Sense of his Authority. I do not say that Almighty God will actually punish such a Man as much in degree, as if He had been tried in all other Instances, and wilfully sinned in all: but I know not whether in strict Justice He might not. And this I say, that a Man's Guilt must be in Proportion to his inward Disposition; which, it is manifest (all Circumstances of Inclination and Temptation being supposed equal) would produce the same Behaviour and Practice in *all* Cases, which it doth in *one*. *Whosoever* therefore *offends* in *one Point* only, is *guilty of all*, in this Sense; because He would as certainly yield in *all*, as He doth in *this*, were He to undergo a Tryal, equal in every respect, in all other Cases.

AGAIN, the same may be proved, and explained, by the Case of such as wilfully transgress any Humane Law. Would not any Master think his Authority, with respect to all his Commands, called in question, by a Servant, who should chuse which He would obey,



obey, and which He would not, merely by his own Humour, or Inclination, or Profit; and wilfully refuse to obey such a particular just and lawful Command, because He had no mind to it; or could get more present Advantage by disobeying it? And would not that Master think that the same Disposition of Mind in such a Servant would carry him to injure and affront him in all other Instances likewise, could He propose to himself the same Pleasure, or Interest, by so doing? Nay, Would not He speak of him, or treat him, as a Person to whom he was obliged for no Service performed out of a Sense of his Authority, or any farther than his own present Interest directed him? The same may be said of any *Lawful Supreme Powers*, and the *Subjects* under them; who, if they wilfully offend against any *one* of their just Laws, are in some Sense guilty of *all*: as they rebel against the Authority which is the same in this Law, as it is in *all* others; and as they would certainly offend against *all* others, were they not sensible, they could not do it, with the same Pleasure or Profit, the same Secrecy or Impunity. And who will reckon the *material Act* of Obedience, in

SERM. any respect, a Virtue ; when it is so certain
 VI. from other Instances, that it had been Diso-
 bedience, had the same inviting Circumstan-
 ces attending it ?

IF therefore, any Persons do allow them-
 selves in any one wilful Sin ; they may be
 certain that their *Guilt* reaches beyond this
 one Sin , as it includes in it a Contempt of
 that Authority by which other Sins, as well
 as this, are forbidden ; and a Disposition
 which would end in the Commission of all
 other Sins, were the same Trials offered
 them in all respects. *Whosoever* therefore
keepeth the whole Law besides, *and yet of-*
fends in one Point, is, in this Sense, guilty
of all. For He that said, *Do not commit*
Adultery, said also, Do not steal. Now if
thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou steal,
thou art become a Transgressor of the Law.

IT seems there were in those Days cer-
 tain unreasonable Persons, amongst the
 Christians, who were very ready to obey the
 Law of God in such Instances as were agree-
 able to their Inclination or their Interest.
 But then they desired leave to hope that
 they might, for the Sake of this Obedience,
 be excused from observing it in some other
 particular

particular Instance: which to be sure They would chuse out for themselves, according to their own Inclination, and Temper. Thus they would willingly retain a darling Sin; and compound for this, by serving God, and obeying his Law, in other Instances, in which they did not find so much Difficulty. And this, I am persuaded, is the Case of many *Christians* now a-days, who think, if they observe the Laws of Christ in most Instances, especially if they be not guilty of open, and notorious Sins, they may indulge themselves in *one* Vice, which they hope will be atoned for by their Observance of the other Evangelical Laws. This Vice they chuse for themselves: not being able to find any Allowance made by *God* to one, more than to another. But, in opposition to this unchristian Humour, and fatal Mistake, this Affirmation of St. *James* in the Text was designed: which I have explained to you; and shall now proceed, as I proposed, in the *second place*,

II. To lay down the Doctrine plainly taught, or implied, in these Words of St. *James*: and to prove the Justice, and Reasonableness of it. Now,

SERM. I. THE least that can be implied in them
 VI. is this, that it is not enough for any Man to
 obey all the other Laws of God, with a silent reserve of so much as one Case, in which he allows himself wilfully to transgress; that the Authority of God equally extends to all his Laws; and that refusal of Obedience in one single Instance is a Rebellion against that Authority; that it is an *Universal Obedience* which God requires, to all his Commands equally, and without Partiality; that Obedience in all Particulars except one shall not atone for the wilful Neglect of that one; but that whosoever doth allow himself in one wilful Sin, under this Pretense, will find himself miserably mistaken, and will be judged and punished at last, as a Contemner of the Authority of God. This is the least, I say, that can be implied in this Declaration of St. *James*: and is no more than what our Lord himself declared, *Matth. vii. 21.* where He openly warns all his Disciples, that nothing can entitle them to an Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, but the *doing the Will of his Father which is in Heaven.* But whosoever wilfully transgresseth in any one Point, certainly

ly cannot be said to do the Will of God, in S E R M.
that Instance, tho' He doth it in all others. VI.

Besides, his Will is his *whole Will*, taken all together : and this being a part of it ; whoever transgresseth this part of it, doth not do the *Will*, or the *whole Will*, of God. That Man therefore, cannot, upon the Gospel Terms, hope for an Admittance into Heaven, who allows himself in the habitual Commission of any one known Sin ; or in any one wilful Transgression of the Will of God. Our *Lord* himself hath in those Words put our Title to Heaven upon our sincere Regard to the whole Will of God, in all its parts : as his *Apostle*, in the Text, hath utterly precluded all who pretend to observe some parts of God's Law, whilst they wilfully continue in the Neglect of others, from any Hopes of God's Favour.

2. T H E Justice and Reasonableness of *God's* requiring this *Universal Obedience*, without any Exception to any one Law, or any one part of his Will more than another, is so apparent, that every one can see it in the Case of others, tho' He may be so weak as fondly to hope for an Exemption in his own Case. Put it to the covetous Man,
whether

SERM. whether the Condemnation threatned a-
gainst the more expensive Vices be not just
and fitting; who more ready to join in it
than himself? Put it to the Voluptuary, whe-
ther it be not highly reasonable that the
Wrath of God should be reveled, and exe-
cuted, against so vile a Crime as Covetous-
ness; and you need not doubt of his Appro-
bation of it. So will the dishonest Man con-
demn the Uncleaness of another; and the
unclean condemn the dishonest: every one
thinking (if they think at all of such Mat-
ters) that any particular Transgression of
God's Law must in reason be punished by
God; so it be not That of which they know
themselves to be guilty, and for which they
have their own peculiar Temper, Inclinati-
on, or Interest, to plead. This indeed they
will inwardly except; out of a Self-Love and
an Aversion to Misery: but yet even this
they do, only with some faint Hope; not
with any fixed Judgment, that it will not be
highly fitting even for this particular Sin to
receive its just Reward. But suppose this
were their fixed Judgment in their own
Case; we know their Judgment is bias'd
when themselves are concerned; and much
more

more free when it is the Case of others a-
bout which they are to judge. SERM.
VI.

LET therefore, but the Judgment of
Christians be enquired into, about the Case
of others living but in one known Sin, for
which themselves have no Fondness, or In-
clination ; and you will find them all allow-
ing that this continued Course of one parti-
cular Sin is a most high Provocation to God ;
a continued Affront to his Authority ; and
what justly deserves to be punished at last,
when He shall come to judge all Men for
their Offenses against him.

BUT, farther, if this *Universal Obedience*
were not the Condition of Eternal Happi-
ness ; what would Men have to do, but to
chuse out the Vice for which they find the
greatest Fondness in themselves, and that
which will be most agreeable to them ; and
give themselves all that Loose in this, which
can be consistent with the Observation of
the other Laws of the Gospel ? Nay, where
would be the Harm, upon this Supposition,
if each Man chose to himself Two or Three
Darlings out of the whole Catalogue of Sins,
to love, and pursue ? If God can be supposed
to pass over the continued wilful Violation
of

SERM. of his Laws in *one* Instance, for the sake of
 VI. Obedience in others; why not in *Two* In-
 stances, if the same Excuse of Inclination,
 and Temptation, can be pleaded? Thus every
 Man may have his Idol, set up in the same
 Heart in which God places his Temple: and
 which do you think will have the greatest
 Share of Adoration, and Service in this
 Competition? Why, it is plain that God Al-
 mighty can have only that Service which the
 Idol can spare; no more Love, or Obedi-
 ence, than what is consistent with the Prose-
 cution of this particular Vice now supposed
 to be connived at by God. And can any
 one think it tolerable, to entertain such an
 Opinion of Almighty God, as makes his Will
 to truckle to a beloved Sin; and to accept
 of so much Service only as *that* can spare,
 without being neglected it self? Can any
 one think it pardonable in himself to think
 thus of the wise, and holy God, that He
 can give a Licence after such a manner to
 any one Vice: much more to think that
 He can give such Allowance to all Vices.

FOR I must observe farther, that this Sup-
 position would not only be an Allowance
 to any one particular Vice; but in general

to *all*, and every one. For if Almighty S E R M.
 God be supposed to overlook the Covetous- VI.
 ness of one Man, for the sake of any other
 Virtues; He must, by the same Reason, be
 supposed to connive at the Dishonesty of a-
 nother; at the Uncleaness of a third; at
 the Drunkenness of a fourth; and so conse-
 quently, at the particular Vice to which any
 particular Person hath addicted himself. For
 by the same Right that we chuse our own
 Vice, which we think to except from his
 Anger and Condemnation; by the same
 Right, I say, another chuses another Vice,
 agreeable to his Temper, Inclination, and
 Opportunities. And by this means not only
 our darling Vice is excepted; but the dar-
 ling Vice of every one in particular: which
 brings in an Encouragement to universal De-
 bauchery, and to every Instance of Folly,
 and Wickedness. The Adulterers, Fornici-
 cators, Drunkards, Swearers, Extortioners,
 Covetous, Malicious, Revengeful, Back-
 biters, Envious, Murtherers; all who are
 expressly excluded the *Kingdom of Heaven*
 in the *New Testament*, may at this rate en-
 tertain Hopes of getting into it by this Arti-
 fice; if they can but plead an Observance of
 God's

SERM. God's Law in other respects ; and a strong
 VI. Inclination, and Temptation, to that particular Vice, in which they have indulged themselves. As unreasonable then, as it is to suppose Almighty God to leave room for Hopes of Indulgence, or Pardon, to all manner of Vices, so they meet not in *one* Person ; so reasonable is it to believe that an *Universal Obedience*, without Partiality, to all his Laws, is the only Obedience to which He hath annexed the Promise of our inheriting Eternal Life.

AGAIN, if this be not the one only Rule for us to go by, in this Affair ; we must suppose our selves left to our own Government and Guidance, much more than is really consistent with supposing God to be our Lord, and our Legislator. For, according to this Supposition, it doth not depend upon Almighty God, what Laws shall be obligatory to us ; but upon our selves, and our own Humour, or Inclination ; our Pleasure, or Profit. For we are to pick and chuse out of all the Laws, He hath given us, which it is our Pleasure to neglect ; and to except out of all the Sins, which He hath in general condemned, that particular Sin which we have



have a mind to indulge. And tho' God hath declared it, amongst others, to be a damning Sin; yet at this rate we have it in our Power to reverse this Decree, and to alter the Nature of it: that so, what God hath declared pernicious, and fruitful of Misery, shall become, by our own favour to it, of an harmless and innocent Nature; only an Instance of our Frailty, and a Subject for his future Mercy to exercise it self upon. He hath told us, that if we be not Doers of his Will, we must expect his Wrath, and Eternal Displeasure: and if this be not so, then we are our own Directors, and in great Part out of his Jurisdiction; I mean, if we can frame another Rule for our selves, and oppose it to his. He commands Obedience to *all* his Laws. We claim a Right to except *one*. He forbids every *Vice*. We pretend a Privilege to retain *one*: and promise him, we will be as careful as can be in other Instances, if He will overlook this. After this manner, I say, we take our selves from under his Government; and assume a Dominion over our selves in some Instances, equal to what we pretend to allow to him in others. But nothing can be more absurd than this:
and

S E R M. and consequently, without universal, im-
 VI. partial Obedience, we can have no Hopes
 to inherit his Rewards, or escape his Punish-
 ments.

BUT, last of all, the Supposition of his ac-
 cepting of an Observance of *some* parts of
 his Will, from Men who continue in the
 known Neglect, and wilful Violation, of o-
 thers, is directly contrary to the Design of
 Christianity; and destructive of the main
 End of the Gospel. For it was a Regard to
 universal Holiness; to a more perfect Obe-
 dience to the Laws of Righteousness, and a
 more perfect Freedom from all Sin, that en-
 gaged God to send his Son into the World;
 and that influenced our Lord to undertake
 his great Work. He appeared to put away
 and destroy, not one, or two, but all *the*
Works of the Devil. His Grace was reve-
 led to teach Men to deny Ungodliness, and
worldly Lusts; without Exception, and
 without any Reserve to what might be the
 peculiar Favourite of any Man. And it is
 a contradicting this Design; a frustrating this
 End; if he hath left any Hopes of the Mercy
 which he purchased, to Those who allow
 themselves in any one of the Works of the
 Devil;

Dèvil; or continue in any sort of Ungodli-
ness; or in any one worldly Lust.

S E R M.
VI.

BESIDES, the Case of the Generality, or Bulk, of Mankind being manifestly this, that it is one particular darling Sin that enslaves the Man; that he is devoted to this, and for this often neglects other Sins, as well as his Duty: it was without doubt to engage Men to leave the Sin *which doth so easily beset them*; to disengage them from that Bondage which This kept them in, that the Son of God appeared in the Flesh, and instituted his holy Religion. I know, there are Men who seem, without Distinction, to be under the Government and Influence of a whole Body of Sin: to be as covetous, for Instance, as is consistent with their other Vices; and as vicious in other respects as is consistent with their Covetousness, and worldly Designs. But the Case of Multitudes is, that it is one Vice which generally enslaves them so much, that they can willingly sacrifice other Vices, as well as their Virtue, to it. And now put the Case, that our Lord can be supposed to give any Ground for hope of Favour to such Persons, continuing in this State, upon Condition they do, in other Points,

K

observe

S E R M. observe his Laws : and what Good could his
 VI. coming into the World be supposed to do, if
 He brings along with Him any such Indulgence as gives Encouragement, and Strength, to the darling Vice of every Man, who believes in him? Where would be any Endeavours after the *Perfection*, talked of in the Gospel, and becoming Humane Nature? Where would be the Truth of that Proposition, that Christ came to *call Sinners to Repentance*, and Amendment? How vain must his professed Design be, and how unworthy of an holy, and wise God; if He be supposed to appear so partially in the Cause of Virtue? How might the *Heathen Philosophers* themselves have boasted that their own Schemes were more worthy of the Deity? and have drawn an unanswerable Argument against the Divine Authority of an Institution, in which Allowance was given, in effect, to any Sin or Wickedness Men would particularly give themselves up to? But I have said enough upon the present Head.

T H E remaining part of what I proposed upon this Subject, I must reserve to another opportunity. But from what hath been said it is evident that, if we would not fix the
 highest

highest Absurdities upon *Almighty God*, and *our Saviour*, and his *Gospel*; we must be firmly persuaded that it is an *universal Obedience* to all his *Commands* equally, which God requires in order to our *Happiness*: and that the continued Allowance of our selves in any one wilful Sin, is inconsistent with all Hopes of his *Mercy*, as far as it is revealed and promised in his *Gospel*.



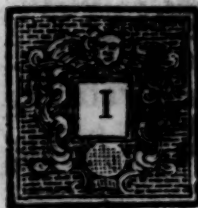
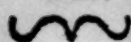
Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

SERMON VII.

St. JAMES, ii. 10.

*For whosoever shall keep the whole Law,
and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty
of all.*

SERM.
VII.



IN my last Discourse I proposed,

I. To shew you the true meaning of these Words.

II. To lay down the Doctrine certainly taught, or implied, in them.

III. To answer some Questions which may arise upon this Subject.

IV. To draw such Observations and Inferences, from the whole, as may be of use, in order to our successful Endeavours after Eternal Life.

As

As to the *first* of these; I then shewed you that one who allows himself in the wilful Neglect of any known Duty, or in the wilful Commission of any known Sin, may justly be said to be guilty, with respect to the other parts of God's Law, as well as this particular Instance, as he sins against that Divine Authority by which the whole was enacted; and as the sinning against that Authority in one Instance doth imply in it a Neglect and Contempt of it in all others also, in which it is of no greater force or account, than it is in this Particular: and likewise, as the Disposition of Mind which permits or induceth the Sinner wilfully to transgress in one Instance, would inevitably produce the same Effect, in other Instances, supposing all the Circumstances of Inclination, and Temptation, to be equal.

As to the *second* Head; I shewed you that the main Design of the Passage was to assure Men of the Folly of imagining that they could atone for the wilful Violation, and continued Transgression, of any one Law of God, by the Observation of others: and therefore, that the least that could be intended by St. James in it was this, that

S E R M. it is an universal Obedience to all his Laws
 VII. which God expects of Christians; that if
 they think to except any part of his Will
 from their Observation, and that He will excuse this for the Sake of Obedience to other parts of it, they will find themselves miserably deluded; and that nothing can recommend them to his Favour at last, but a sincere, constant, and universal Obedience to all his Commands, without Partiality, and without Exception; and that upon the Condition of such an Obedience, for the Time to come, any Christian who hath been a Sinner, may hope for his Mercy, thro' *Jesus Christ*: but not without it; as far as we know of his Will declared in the Gospel. This I shewed you to be plain from these Words of St. *James*, as well as others of our *Lord* himself: and likewise from the many Absurdities following from the contrary Supposition. I come now,

III. To consider some Questions, and Doubts, which may arise upon this Subject.

Now there are Two which presently offer themselves to our Thoughts. The *first* is this, Whether it doth not follow from what hath been said that Almighty God requires

quires of us a perfect, sinless, Obedience. S E R M.
VII.
To which I answer,

I. I T is certain that God requires an Obedience to all, and every of his Commands; at all Times, and in all Places equally: and likewise that there is no one Sin, or Transgression of his Law, in any one Instance, but what He disapproves of, and absolutely forbids. And therefore, if our Practice were directed, without Variation, by his Rules; it would be a perfect and sinless Obedience. In this Sense therefore, it may justly be said that He requires a perfect, sinless Obedience at our Hands, free from all wilful Sin. And wilful Sin being that which we could have avoided, if we would; it is certain, He may justly forbid, and condemn it in every Instance. Nay, this we might be certain of, without any express Revelation, that the supreme infallible Understanding, the most wise and holy God, could not but will that every Law of Reason should be strictly and constantly observed by reasonable Creatures; and could not but condemn all wilful Transgressions of it, as the most unreasonable and absurd Practices. But now, since this is such an Obedience as was never

SER M. yet actually performed by any Mortal ; every
 VII. Man in the World having found himself
 surrounded with Infirmities, and misled by
 Temptations and Trials, in some Instance or
 other, so as that He cannot but confess him-
 self guilty of some wilful Deviation, in some
 Point or other, from the Rule of right
 Reason, and the Will of God ; it remains
 to enquire what *Condescension* is shewn by
 Almighty God, in the Gospel, thro' *Jesus*
Christ.

2. THEREFORE, it is certain, from the
 Gospel, that every wilful Transgression of
 his Law is not unpardonable : for the Design
 of it was to offer Pardon upon some Con-
 ditions to wilful Sinners. This is very con-
 sistent with the former Proposition: For, as
 a Father may command such and such Parti-
 culars ; and yet admit his Son to Reconcilia-
 tion, upon some Terms, after he hath trans-
 gressed any of these Commands : so like-
 wise may Almighty God require Obedience
 to every one of his Commands, at all Times,
 and in all Places ; and yet, after any have
 been so unhappy as wilfully to transgress any
 of his commands, He may forgive them
 these Transgressions, upon some certain
 Terms,

Terms, and Conditions. It is, therefore, S E R M.
certain that Almighty God forbids every Sin VII.
always, and enjoins the Practice of every 
Virtue at all Opportunities; and in this
Sense may be said to require a sinless Obedi-
ence: and it is as certain that there is room
left, by his open Declarations, for Favour
and Mercy to such as have wilfully commit-
ted Sin. It appears, therefore,

3. T H A T the Perfection, which is so re-
quired of Christians, as that they shall not be
made happy at last without it, is Amend-
ment and Reformation in those Instances in
which they have wilfully failed; and a con-
stant Progress in Virtue and well-doing.
This State of the *Case* at once guards against
that comfortless Doctrine, on the one
hand, that God will insist at last upon that
spotless and absolute Perfection which never
was yet known in a Mortal: and against
that fatal Mistake, on the other hand, that
He will accept Sinners to Mercy, for the
Sake of Christ, tho' they have no Signs in
their Lives and Behaviour, of their hearty
Repentance, and Detestation of Sin.

T H E Perfection required of Man, in a
State of Trial and Probation, cannot be a
State

SERM. State incapable of Improvement : because
 VII. this seems not attainable in such a State by
 such a Creature ; or, at least, never was actually attained by any. And who, according to this Rule, supposing this to be required, could come to any well-grounded Hopes of Happiness? For who in his Senses can think himself at any time so good, so perfectly free from every thing evil, as He might possibly be? But it must consist in a daily Progress, and sincere Endeavour, after Perfection ; in an increasing Conquest over what is evil in us ; and in a daily acquiring more and more of those good Qualities, in which we can think our selves defective. This progressive Motion in the Paths of Virtue, and this increasing Conquest over Sin, will sufficiently demonstrate the sincere Repentance of a Sinner ; and will be a good Foundation in his breast, for Hope and Comfort.

IN this Sense therefore, God requires universal Obedience to all his Commands equally ; and insists upon it as a Condition without which we shall not be happy at last ; that in what Instances soever we have in Time past offended, in *these* He expects us for the future to amend ; that in what Points
 soever

soever of the Law of Righteousness we are defective, He absolutely requires an Improvement in them; a Progress, or growing, in all that is good; a departure, or flying, from every thing that we know to be evil. He will bestow no Happiness upon those who go on to allow themselves in any one known Transgression of his Law, till Death overtakes them; nor doth He in the Gospel give us Ground to entertain any Hopes, that they shall ever experience his Favour, or be put upon the Level with such as by patient Continuance in well-doing seek after Glory and Immortality.

THIS, therefore, is a sufficient Answer to the *first Question*, concerning the Obedience required to all God's Commands; that it cannot be so understood as if He would not make any happy who had not arrived in this World at a State of *absolute Perfection* and Freedom from every degree of Sin, or moral Evil: but must be understood thus, that He doth absolutely require of all who know themselves to have been in any respect *wilfull Sinners*, that they do sincerely set about the Work of Amendment; and demonstrate their Sincerity by getting Ground of

SERM.
VII.

SERM. of their Vices ; by proceeding to greater degrees of Vertue ; and by going still more and more towards the Perfection of rational Creatures ; at least, till they are out of the Power and Dominion of any known Sin, and till they are in such measure possessed of the contrary Virtue, as to be justly denominated virtuous in that Instance in which they know they have been vicious. This is a State of Perfection to which the meanest Christian may arrive ; if He knows but what Virtue and Vice mean. This is that Condition of our Acceptance, that Law of the Gospel, which will admit of no Abatements at the great Day. And it is an invaluable Mercy, that God will accept of this Progress, and Improvement in Virtue, instead of a State of blameless Perfection.

THE *second Question* which offers itself, now we have been speaking of the *Terms of Favour* proposed in the *Gospel*, and the Conditions of our Acceptance at last, is this, How we shall be able to form a good Judgment concerning our own Condition ; or to know when we are in such Circumstances, as to be able to have a well-grounded Hope unto Eternal Life.

WHAT

WHAT I have said concerning the *last* S E R M.
Question will help us in the resolving this VII.
to our own Satisfaction: but I shall not re-
fer to that; but be a little more particular.
I am sensible, indeed, that many desire to
know exactly what is barely enough for their
Happiness, for fear they should do too much
for themselves; not out of any Love to
Virtue; but indeed out of Love to Vice,
which they would gladly retain something
of, if they could with any Safety. This I
believe, is impossible to be defined exactly,
so as to suit all Cases: God having never
declared what is the lowest Pitch of Holiness
that He will accept of at last. And I cannot
but think it wisely concealed from Men;
that so Sincerity may be encouraged, and a
Love to Virtue, which seems impossible to
consist with the Notions of such Inquirers;
that so the more may depend upon Men's own
Integrity; and least the general Progress in
the Paths of Virtue should be more stinted
than it is already: it being too probable that
most Men would be content to place them-
selves just out of Danger, rather than to make
any large Progress in the Ways of Righte-
ousness. For there is a great deal of diffe-
rence

S E R M.

VII.



rence between the Love of future Happiness, and the Fear of future Misery ; and much more in the latter that moves the Actions of most Men, than in the former ; and Ground enough for Suspicion, that if Men could but secure themselves from Punishment in the Life to come, they would stop just at that Pitch which they knew would do that, and not greedily aspire after such Degrees of Virtue as would carry them to great Heighths of Happiness. But tho' it be impossible to satisfy all the Inquiries of such Persons, as these ; who indeed cannot be in a safe way, whilst they are of a Temper so little a-kin to Sincerity, and a serious Love of Religion ; yet it may be possible to offer such Considerations as may help other more truly sincere Christians to judge whether they have Ground to hope that they themselves are so disposed, and so free from Sin, as to be within the Covenant of Grace and Mercy, the Conditions of which I have, in some former Discourses, been representing and explaining to you.

H E therefore, who makes no other use of the gracious Proposals of the Gospel, but to encourage himself to recover from any Sin,

Sin, of which He knows he hath wilfully S E R M.
been guilty; and is so affected by any In- VII.
stance of his past Weakness, as to keep a
greater and stricter Watch over himself for
the Time to come; He, who at any time
finds, upon a review of himself, that, tho'
He be not absolutely perfect, yet, He gets
Ground of his Imperfections, and proceeds,
by a daily Course, farther and farther, in the
Paths of Virtue; He, who carefully avoids
the Opportunities and Temptations, by
which He knows He hath formerly fallen;
may reasonably conclude that He is truly
sensible of the Importance of Holiness, and
of the Necessity of forsaking his Vices, and
sincerely disposed to practise the one, and
relinquish the other. He, who when He
unavoidably, and without any Fault of his
own, meets with the same Trials, and Temp-
tations, which have formerly vanquished
him, finds his Belief of a future State and
Sense of his Duty strong enough to vanquish
them, and resist all their Arts and Force, hath
good ground to Hope that He is in a Way
acceptable to God.

IN some Cases, the Rule for this Judg-
ment is so manifest that it cannot be mista-
ken.

SERMON. He who hath robb'd or cheated his
 VII. Neighbour, after any manner; whether by
 the Smiles of a Friend, or the Force of an
 Enemy; cannot but know whether He hath,
 or hath not, made Restitution, to the utter-
 most of his Power, of whatsoever He hath
 thus obtained by Fraud, or Force. This is
 what removes the Guilt of that Injustice:
 and without this it is impossible He can think
 that He comes up to the *Terms of Accep-*
tance, or is in a safe Way to Happiness. So
 likewise, in all other sorts of personal Inju-
 ries, whether respecting the Reputation, or
 Quiet, of our Neighbour; He who doth to
 his utmost make Amends for the Damage re-
 ceived, comes up to the *Terms of Accep-*
tance, as far as this Crime is concerned. So
 that in this Case it is too easy to judge, for
 Men to pretend an Evasion. In fine, He is
 certainly in a safe Way, who, in this State,
 which, as I said, is not a State of absolute
 but of increasing Perfection in Virtue, is
 ever studying what He hath to subdue in
 himself, and is always subduing it by the
 Power of Religion.

ON the contrary; He, who takes Encou-
 ragement before sinning from the Doctrine
 of

of Acceptance and Reconciliation, delivered in the Gospel, to venture still farther in the Paths of Sin, with a foolish Hope of coming up to the *Terms* of that *Acceptance* some time or other, is as yet in a very unsafe Condition; without any the least Ground of Hope from those Terms of Favour which He thus abuses to his own vile Purposes. He, who finds himself led by his sinning at any time, rather to love the Sin, than to detest and guard against it; rather to run to the Temptation, than to fly from it, hath too much reason to suspect his own Case. He, who finds his Sense of the Importance of Morality and Virtue diminishing, and the Power of the World, or the Flesh, increasing over him, so far that he is still every Day carried by their Allurements, or Affrightments, into the Practice of Sin, may be sure that he is rather laying up for himself the Matter of a terrible Repentance to come, than truly repenting at this time of any thing past. He, who keeps Possession of what he hath unjustly obtained; or refuses to do right, or make Restitution, to his Neighbour whom he hath injured; how deep soever his Sorrow, how many soever

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his

S E R M. his Tears may be, is far from the Way of

VII.

God, or any well-grounded Hopes of Salvation, upon the *Gospel-Terms*. In a word, He, who finds within himself that his Virtue grows less, and his Passions increase in Strength; that he is so far from getting Ground of them, that they get Ground of him every Day, is in the worst Condition we can well imagine. And He, who finds that he is a Captive to any one wilful Sin; that he hath not yet made any successful Warfare against it; that he hath not yet got out of its Power; that his Faith in God, his Sense of Religion, his Belief of a future State, are not sufficient to disengage him from it; but that it keeps its Ground, and is too hard for the Resistance of his Virtue, may be sure that He is not yet in such a Condition, as that He may at all depend upon the Favour of God, promised in the Gospel to returning Sinners; having not yet made himself any more obedient to his whole Will than He hath been in Time past.

THESE Particulars I have laid down briefly: but hope the Consciences of all, who are any ways concerned, will apply what hath been said to their own particular

Cases;

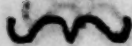
Cases, without any such foolish Partiality as may endanger their own Eternal Salvation. But if they will not act sincerely with themselves, when themselves only are concerned, and when Almighty God hath shewn such a tender Regard to their Interest, but, on the contrary, will endeavour, and labour hard, to put a Cheat upon their own Souls: how wonderfully strange is this? and how little Thanks will they owe themselves, when they come to feel the Effect of so wilful a Delusion! After having spoken to these *Two Questions*, I come now, in the last place, as I proposed,

IV. To draw such Observations and Inferences from the whole, as may be of use to us in our successful Endeavours, after Eternal Life. These are such as our Thoughts, I hope, have been naturally led into already by my past Discourses; and will often run into, when we come to retire, and to consider of our true and eternal Interest. The Time will now permit me to mention but Two or Three. As,

I. FROM the very Words of St. James in the Text, and the lowest Sense in which they can be understood, as well as from the

SERM. Absurdity which I have shewn in the contrary Supposition, it is evident that, upon the Gospel Terms, there is no such thing as atoning for the Neglect of one Virtue by the Performance of others; nay, nor by the Performance of every other Virtue.

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2. FROM what hath been said let every one observe, that it is not Inclination, or Custom, that can excuse or bear them out in the continued Commission of Sin; or in the repeated Neglect of any known Duty. For God excepts no Sin from his Condemnation; no Duty out of his Commands. He requires all equally, as we have seen: and to pretend to exempt our selves, is to put our selves out of his Jurisdiction, and Government; and to set our Humour and Inclination above his Law, and Authority. Yet how many Men do we meet with, who are apt to think their own Sin, to which they are most inclined, and most easily seduced, to be out of the Number of the condemned Vices; or else to hope that God will depart from his settled Rules, on purpose to release their Punishment. They will pray, and hear; and perhaps receive the Sacrament; and do several good Actions, to the end that their

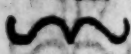
Inclina-

Inclination may be allowed of by God Almighty: and as long as they do what they have no great Temptation to allure them from doing; or omit that Sin to which they are under no strong Bias; they foolishly imagine that their Inclination and Bias to another Sin will be Excuse enough for their Darling and Bosom Vice. But, if St. James says true, they who are, in one Instance, Transgressors, are Sinners against all the Law, and the whole Authority by which it was enacted.

3. LET the very best of us be led, by what hath been said, to look narrowly into our selves, and to see whether there be not some latent Root of Vice in us; some secret and less observed Instance, in which we transgress the Will of God. The Christian World is come to that pass, that He who is not guilty of open Acts of notorious Sin, Drunkenness, Adultery, Blasphemy, Revenge, or the like, passeth for a good Christian: and many think it well with them, because they cannot accuse themselves of such Sins. And so far indeed it is well. But alas! Though they be not thus openly lewd, and profligate: yet perhaps, there remains

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something in them that requires, and is worthy of, a Cure. They are not Swearers, or Drunkards, or Unclean, or Profane: but perhaps, a silent Discontent eats thro' their Hearts; a secret grudging and repining discomposeth their Nights and Days; Envy gnaws upon them; or some Passion or other torments, and holds them Captive. Some Imperfection or other we may find, if we turn our Eyes more to what we have of Evil in us, than to what we have not. And here lies the Business of every Christian, to conquer his own proper Enemy. If we have no very great ones; if we be out of the Reach and Power of the most formidable: the more Shame and Ignominy, to be led captive and spoiled by those of less Strength, and less Account. Let us not think it beneath us to exert our selves against the least of God's Enemies, and our own. Since 'tis a Progress towards Perfection that is required of us; let us think and act, as if we thought it our Duty to make this Progress.

It, thro' the Happiness of a good Disposition, and careful Education, we have escaped those Pollutions under which so many in the World groan; let us thank God: and let

let us remember that it is from hence that we are to begin our Race; that we have not those Impediments which others have created to themselves by a long Course of wilful Sin; and that we have Incitements, and Encouragements from hence, as well as Obligation, to attempt the greater Heighths of Religion and Virtue. By Religion here I do not mean Devotion, and Prayer; which yet are of admirable Use, and of great Necessity; but the greater Degrees of all that is good; the more sure Conquest over all our Passions; the more quiet Possession of our Souls in Patience; the more profound Submission to God's Will, and to all the Dispensations of his Providence; the more composed Resignation of our selves to his good Pleasure; the bringing down every Imagination which raiseth it self against him; the subduing every undue Tendency in us towards worldly Ambition, Honour, or Riches; the quieting every turbulent Motion in our Breasts; the taking off more and more the Edge of the Mind from all sensual Enjoyments; the Discovery, and gradual Amendment, of the least Dislocations, the least irregular Movements, the most secret Disorders of our Wills

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and Affections. This is the Task of a Christian, who is past the Danger of being immersed in open Vice and Profaneness: to go on from Strength to Strength; from one Degree to another; from one Branch of Perfection to another; till He is called for by God into a State of greater Perfection. And whoever will seriously look into themselves, will find Instances enough of Imperfection; in the amending of which they will shew a sincere Intention to please God, and give themselves a greater Hope of his Mercy than they could otherwise have.

BUT last of all, let none of us increase our own Misery by such a Baseness of Temper, as ungratefully to abuse the Mercy of God, offered us upon the *Terms* of the *Gospel*, to the Purposes of Sin and Wickedness. This is a Sin of a deep Hue; and what will indeed be the greatest Aggravation of our continuing in our Vices. God offers us, for the sake of his Son, to receive us to Favour, returning to him; and sincerely practising his whole Will for the future, without any Partiality, or Neglect of any part of it. It is a servile and ignominious Disposition, for which no Name is bad enough, to take occasion

caſion from the Offer of Mercy to which S E R M.
 univerſal Amendment and Holineſs is at any VII.
 time entitled, to defer our Amendment and
 Holineſs. The only generous Way; the
 only ſecure Way for our own Intereſt, (which
 we pretend to be ſo dear to us;) is immedi-
 ately and without Delay to endeavour to
 come up to his *Terms*, that we may obtain
 his Promiſes; to work out our Salvation
while the Day laſteth: becauſe the Night
cometh (we know not how ſoon) *when no*
Man can work. Thus ſhall we find the
 Way to *Eternal Life*, before it be hid from
 our Eyes: which God grant we may! &c.





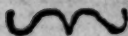
Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

S E R M O N V I I I .

H E B R E W S x. 26, 27.

For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin: but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries.

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V I I I .



H A V E, in several Discourses, shewn you, from plain and uncontestable Passages of the New Testament, what those *Terms and Conditions* are, upon which *Almighty God* will finally pardon, accept, and justify, those professed Christians, who have been, in any Sense, or any Degree, *wilful Sinners*: and in my last Discourse I summ'd them up in that one Condition of *sincere,*

sincere, universal, and impartial Obedience S E R M. VIII.
 to all the Laws of God, without Exception;
 or a real and sensible Amendment of their
 Lives and Tempers, in all those Instances, in
 which they know themselves to have trans-
 gressed any of his Commandments. In or-
 der still more to confirm the Truth of what
 hath been said upon this Subject, I design to
 consider particularly those several Schemes,
 and various Hopes, which the Imaginations
 of Men have framed to themselves, more a-
 greeable to their own Humours, and Inclina-
 tions; in Opposition to these settled Con-
 ditions of God's Favour.

BUT, before I set about this, it will be
 very proper to take notice of another sort of
 Mistake in this important Affair, equally
 contradictory to what I have already laid
 down; equally fatal to ill-disposed Minds;
 and very troublesome and afflictive to many
 well-meaning and honest Christians: and
 that is, the Opinion that their Case, as well
 as the Case of all professed Christians who
 have been at any time *wilful Sinners*, is so
 sad and desperate, that it is in vain for them
 to hope for Pardon and Reconciliation, up-
 on any Terms; even tho' they should hearti-
 ly

SERM. ly endeavour to come up to the *Conditions*
 VIII. I have heretofore laid down. These are of
 a differing sort, and of a differing Temper, from the most of their Neighbours. And their Opinion is pretended to be founded upon some *Texts* of the *New Testament*, which seem to speak of the Irremissibleness of some Sins, which perhaps they fancy themselves to have been guilty of; and particularly upon this Passage, now read to you: which, taken by it self, and separated from the Context and manifest Scope of the Writer of this *Epistle*, seems to conclude, in general, against all Hope of Pardon to such as have sinned wilfully after the receiving and professing the Christian Religion.

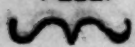
IN Opposition to such Imaginations, (which render all that I have before advanced of none effect) I shall not confine my View to this one Text of the *New Testament*: but I shall have regard to several others, which have been, in the same manner, mistaken and misapplied; as well as to some Considerations taken from the Nature of God, and the End of the Gospel; designing

I. To shew the great Absurdity of fixing SER M
upon Almighty God, or the Christian Reli- VIII
gion, any such Opinion as that all Hope of
Pardon is cut off, in the Gospel, from Any
Christians who have been wilful Sinners.
And

II. To consider particularly the Intent
of those mistaken Texts; and the Impossibi-
lity of fairly fixing upon them any such Opi-
nion as this.

AND these Points I think it very useful
to explain. For tho' the Generality of pro-
fessed Christians are more apt to presume up-
on the Goodness and Mercy of God; and
to interpret all Texts of Scripture concern-
ing that, so much in their own Favour as to
receive some Support from them, even
whilst they wilfully continue in their Sins:
yet, since there are, on one hand, some o-
thers who may, from a pretended Despair
of God's Mercy, go on to increase the Num-
ber of their Transgressions; and, on the o-
ther hand, some weak, tho' honest, Chri-
stians, who have been brought to the me-
lancholy Condition of thinking themselves,
without any Ground, to be such sort of Sin-
ners as have forfeited all Title to God's fu-
ture

SER M.
VIII.



ture Mercy; it is very necessary to consider this Point, that so the Uneasiness of the latter, which is only their present Unhappiness; and the Despair of the former, which is their Crime (as it is founded upon their Desire to continue in their Sins;) may be removed; and some Stop put to such destructive Imaginations. Nor can it be amiss for us to descend, as near as we can, to the Wants and Occasions of all sorts of Persons; to consider the Scruples of some, as well as the Presumption of others; and to accommodate our Teaching sometimes to the more rare and secret Cases, as well as at other times to the more known and common. Nay, it is indeed necessary, in order to place beyond all reasonable Doubt what I have heretofore laid down, to handle this Subject: that so it may appear, not only that the *Terms* of God's Favour which I have pointed out, are the only *Terms* upon which He hath promised Acceptance; but that there is no reason to think but that all professed Christians may be sure of Acceptance, upon coming up to those *Terms*, whatsoever their former Condition hath been. To return,

all that God's Word has promised us have forfeited all Title to God's favour

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I. I SHALL now endeavour to shew the great Absurdity of fixing upon Almighty God, and the Christian Religion, any such Opinion, as that before mentioned. SERM.
VIII.

1. IT is extremely absurd to suppose that Almighty God, in condescending to make Terms with his Creatures, in the Christian Dispensation, should not propose some Method of Reconciliation to all those who sin after they have received that Religion, as well as to those who had been Sinners before their believing: because no Man, tho' never so hearty and sincere in his Profession of that Religion, is thereby made so infallible, that nothing shall ever impose upon his Judgment; or so well-guarded and resolute as that nothing shall be able to surprize, or entice, his Will into a Consent to Sin, in any possible Instance. It may be true that a Christian hath such a Power, and so much Strength, and that He is so free from an absolute Necessity of committing any one single wilful Sin, that He may possibly, by Watchfulness, and Consideration, and a perpetual Care over himself, prevent this. But it is true likewise that this is so very difficult, that the Experience and Confession of all the best Men,
in

SERM. in all Ages, have demonstrated that this fin-
 VIII. less Obedience was never performed in Fact.



THERE is indeed a vast difference, and in the Opinion of the World a greater sometimes than is just, between Sins: which hath induced some Men perhaps to think themselves more free from Sin than they really are. Some are apt to imagine, because they do not permit themselves to be guilty of Drunkenness, or Adultery, or Fornication, or Murther, or Covetousness, or Dishonesty in their Dealings, that therefore they are clean. But they often forget the Thoughts of Pride and Haughtiness; of Revenge and Implacability; of Severity and Ill-nature; of Envy and Malice; of Anger and Passion; of Ambition and worldly Grandeur; the frequent Mispence of their precious Time, and the like: in one, or more, of which, they have, some time or other, in some degree or other, too certainly indulged themselves more than they can answer for at the Bar of Justice. Too certainly, I say: for, Is there a perfect Man upon Earth? Is there one, who hath not one weak Side? who hath been always so strictly upon his Guard as that He can say, He hath resisted all Temptations to every

every sort, and every degree of Sin? It hath S E R M.
VIII.
 been often observed to you, that Men are
 too apt to pass over the Consideration of that
 particular Vice to which they have found
 themselves inclined; especially, if it be not
 of the Number of those which are called
 scandalous and notorious Crimes: Whereas
 some of these I have now mentioned, do in
 truth defile the Soul; hinder the Perfection
 of Virtue; render the Man as truly obnox-
 ious to the Divine Anger; and as truly oppose
 the Design of Christianity, as some of the
 former sort; and therefore ought to be e-
 steemed as Sins, and acknowledged as such
 by all Christians.

I BELIEVE, therefore, it may be truly
 affirmed that there neither is, nor ever was,
 a Christian, who hath not, in some Instance
 or other, suffered himself to be carried be-
 yond the Bounds of strict Religion, particu-
 larly of the Christian Institution; so as that
 He must acknowledge himself, to the great
 Judge of the World, and Knower of Hearts,
 to be, in some degree or other, a wilful
 Sinner after the Reception of Christianity.
 St. *Paul* indeed, after his Conversion to the
 Christian Religion, and his Labours in the
M
Work

SERM. Work of the Gospel, doth say, that He is
 VIII. conscious to himself of nothing for which
 He can condemn himself, 1 Cor. iv. 4.
 for that is the meaning of those Words, *I know nothing by myself.* But He doth not mean this in any other Sense, to be sure, but this, that in the main He had performed his Office after such a manner, as that He had good Ground to hope for the Favour of God, and the Rewards of Heaven: which Assurance others likewise may arrive at. That He could intend by this to signify that, in any single Instance either of Thought, Word, or Deed; either consider'd as an *Apostle*, or as a private Christian; He had nothing to accuse himself of; is a Supposition without all Ground. For He doth not appear to have had such an Opinion of himself: and particularly seems to have acknowledged himself in an hasty and indecent Passion before the High-priest, *Acts* xxiii. 3. for the Words cannot be understood to mean less than that. Nor indeed doth He extend the Expression, 1 Cor. iv. 4. to himself in all Capacities: but is there considering himself particularly as called to, and executing, the Work of an *Apostle*. St. Peter once thought it absolutely

lutely impossible that any worldly Consideration could bring him to a Denial of his *Master*, after all the convincing Evidences, to which He had been witness, of his being the true *Messiah* : and yet, the same Night in which He shewed this Confidence, He shewed his Weakness also.

THIS, therefore, being undoubtedly true, that no Christian, since the first preaching of the Gospel, hath actually so fulfilled the Law of Christ, as to be entirely free from all Sin either of *Omission*, or *Commission* ; either in Thought, or Word, or Deed : I say, it is absurd to suppose that Almighty God would leave no room in such a Dispensation, for the Recovery and Reconciliation of wilful Sinners, after their believing the Gospel ; without which there could be no Salvation obtained. This would be to bring Men into such a Dispensation as must only affright and terrify some, and throw others into a more profligate Course of Sin than they were in, before their believing in Christ. This is to suppose Almighty God calling the World solemnly to the Knowledge of the Gospel ; descending to treat with his Creatures, in order to bestow his Mercy upon them after

S E R M. an extraordinary manner : and that the Effect of this Condescension is, that the sincerest Believer that ever embraced his Call to the Christian Faith, cannot have any Hopes of Pardon, if He hath once after that wilfully transgressed any of his Laws. And what is this but to publish a Religion to the World, which hath no Effect towards making any of the Sons of Men happy ; but indeed, upon this supposition, makes them all much more miserable, in the End, than they would have been without it.

SOME Men have made it a great Objection against the Wisdom and Goodness of God, that he should promulgate, after such a manner, such a Religion as that of Jesus Christ; when He foresaw that so many, who have it in their Power to do otherwise, would live so unworthily of it, in the Practice of gross, and notorious Sins. But the Love of God, in answer to this Objection, is sufficiently seen in the unspeakable Benefit which the better sort receive from this Institution ; and in the Proof which that affords us that others might receive the same, were they not extremely wanting to themselves. But the present Supposition takes away all Hopes, even from the most sincere Believer,

of

of acquitting himself so as to obtain God's SERM. VIII.
Favour at last. For the Weakness of all
Christians, in some Instance or other, prov-
ing such a Difficulty of absolute Perfection,
as no Christian ever yet conquered; this
Supposition represents Almighty God as in-
stituting a Religion entirely fruitless and in-
effectual. Which is so great an Absurdity,
that from hence it may certainly be conclu-
ded that there is a Method of Pardon and Re-
conciliation for those who have wilfully sin-
ned after their receiving the Christian Reli-
gion. And this with respect to all sorts of
wilful Sinners in that Religion: because, as
it is absurd to suppose that God should not
mean and speak Consolation to the better
sort of Christians; so, on the other hand,
it is equally absurd to suppose that He should,
by cutting off all Hopes of Favour on any
Terms, urge and force the worse sort of
Christians into a more resolute and uninter-
rupted Prosecution of their Vices. And this
brings me to another Consideration, *viz.*

2. THAT, as the contrary Opinion, is,
in it self, absurd and shocking; so, it is ex-
pressly contrary to the declared Design of the
Gospel: which is, that all Sinners should be
M 3 called

S E R M. called and invited to Repentance and Reformation; and that Virtue should have an Encouragement annexed to it, sufficient to work upon Men to forsake Vice, and return to the Practice of their Duty. But now, this End could not possibly be answered, if it were certain that, if once Men arrived to such a Pitch of Wickedness, they should never be accepted by Almighty God, even tho' they should forsake it for the Time to come. For, as I observed in a former Discourse, the Certainty of this, nay, the probable Suspicion of this, would incline all Sinners, especially habitual Sinners, to strengthen themselves in their Sins; and to take Courage from their Despair of Mercy, or of any other sort of Happiness, to take as much as they possibly could of the Pleasures of a Course of all manner of Sin; and so to engage themselves, more inextricably than ever, in a vicious Habit of Life.

B u t because some have built so pernicious an Opinion, not upon the Reasonableness of the thing it self; or upon the main End and Design of Christianity; but upon some particular Texts and Passages of the *New Testament*; and argued from them,
against

against the Acceptance of some Sinners, who are professed Christians, upon any Terms whatsoever: I shall now therefore, in order to remedy the Mischief of such a Mistake,

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II. ENDEAVOUR to shew that these Passages of the *New Testament* prove not the Point, for which they are alledged. And of these Passages I shall take particular Notice of *Three*; upon which the whole of the present Debate entirely depends.

I. THE *first* is that Passage, recorded in the *Gospels*, in which our Saviour speaks of *sinning against the Holy Ghost*; and declares it unpardonable; particularly, *Matth. xii. 31, 32*: which some well-meaning Christians have been so unkind to themselves, as, in their desponding Minutes, to apply to their own Case. The particular handling all the Circumstances of this important Passage would require a long Discourse on purpose. But all that is necessary to my present Design is to shew that the Sin there spoken of, is a Sin in which such Persons, as we are now speaking of, cannot possibly be concerned. For whatever it was that was there intended by our Lord; this is manifest, that He speaks to, and of, such

SER M. Persons as themselves saw the Course and
 VIII. Series of his wonderful Works; and did,
 out of mere Malice, and an incorrigible
 Disposition of Mind, ascribe all that He did
 to the Power of evil Spirits: tho' there was not
 the least Sign of that, but manifest Demon-
 stration that He was acting directly against the
 Interest of all evil Spirits. It is upon this
 Occasion, and of such sort of Sinners, that
 He there speaks. And from hence it appears
 that, whatever the Nature and Malignity of
 that Sin was, it cannot be a Sin which it is
 possible for any Persons to commit, who
 profess Faith in Jesus Christ, and believe
 Him to have been sent into the World by
 God; nay, nor for any who did not them-
 selves see with their own Eyes his mighty
 Works, and, out of mere Malice and Per-
 verseness, ascribe them to the Devil. It
 follows therefore that, supposing the *Sin a-*
gainst the Holy Ghost (whatever be the full
 Nature of it) to be unpardonable; (which
 probably must arise from the perverse Dispo-
 sition of Mind from which it proceeds, un-
 capable of Alteration for the better, and not
 from any Resolution of Almighty God never
 to pardon it upon such Alteration for the
 better;)

better ;) supposing, I say, this Sin unpardon-
 able: yet it follows from what hath been
 said that, notwithstanding this, the wilful
 Sins of all who profess Faith in Jesus Christ
 may be pardoned, upon some Terms; and
 that they may be capable of coming up to
 those Terms. For it appears that no pro-
 fessed Christian, or sincere Believer in Jesus
 Christ, is capable of being guilty of this Sin:
 and it is of *Christians*, who have been, or
 are, wilful Sinners, that we are now dis-
 coursing. This is fully sufficient for our
 present Purpose, concerning this Passage a-
 bout *sinning against the Holy Ghost*, viz.
 That professed Christians are not, and can-
 not be, concerned in it.

2. THE second Passage I shall mention,
 is that in the *Sixth* Chapter of the *Epistle* to
 the *Hebrews*, from v. 4. to v. 7. For it
 is impossible for those who were once enlight-
 ened, and have tasted the heavenly Gift,
 and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost,
 and have tasted the good Word of God, and
 the Powers of the World to come, if they
 shall fall away, to renew them again to Re-
 pentance: seeing they crucify to themselves
 the Son of God afresh, and put him to an
 open

SERM. open Shame: concerning which Passage, I
VIII. have the following Observations to offer.

I. THIS is spoken only of a wilful and open Apostacy from the Faith of Christ, and a publick Denial of Jesus Christ, persisted in for some Time: and this Apostacy is the Apostacy of such Persons as had tasted, and been endowed with, some of the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost, seen in those first Days; and had been Witnesses to the great and wonderful Gifts which others in the Church likewise enjoyed, and to all the Wonders of the Gospel-Age, called here by a Jewish Phrase, *the World, or Age, to come*. These are the Persons, and this is the falling away, here spoken of: and such a falling away it is, as may justly be said to be, in effect, an Acquittance of those who crucified our Lord; and a joining with the Infidel World in bringing a publick Shame upon Him, and his Religion. This then is vastly different from the Case of any who are still professed Christians; and cannot possibly be applied to any, who have not, by open Apostacy, fallen from a State of such Gifts, and such Powers, and such Illuminations.

2. THE

2. THE Impossibility of the Acceptance of such Persons is not here fixed upon any Resolution, on the part of Almighty God, not to accept them; should they again sincerely turn to Him and come up to his Terms: but it is declared to arise from the Impossibility of such Persons ever recovering themselves, so as to come up to the Terms of the Gospel. It is said to be impossible to *renew them to Repentance*: not to be impossible for them to be pardoned and accepted, supposing them to come to true Repentance. But we are now speaking of the Pardon of such professed Christians, tho' never so notorious Sinners, as may, and do, come up to the Terms required: and this Passage, you see, cannot be meant of Sinners, during their Christian Profession; or of Sinners of any sort, who do at any time come up to the Terms offered in the Gospel. But then,

3. THE *Impossibility* here spoken of, is not a natural or absolute Impossibility: but only a very great Difficulty; which, in the ordinary way of speaking, is often said to be impossible; and represented by Similitudes taken from natural Impossibilities. At this Day, we our selves often call a difficult Matter,

SERM.
VIII.

SERM. Matter, an impossible thing; without meaning it in the strict and accurate Sense of the Word: and in the Eastern Nations, their Ways of speaking were much more exorbitant, and their Figures of Speech more strange, than those amongst us. *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots?* saith the Prophet, Jer. xiii. 23. *then shall ye also who are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well.* If one were here to follow the Letter of the Expression, one would think that the Prophet was representing it to be as impossible, in the nature of the thing, for the habitual Sinner to turn to the Practice of Virtue, as it is for the *Black-moor* to alter the Colour of his Body. Whereas it is manifest that this could not be intended, because it was the same Prophet's Business and Design, (as it was that of others also) to persuade those very Sinners, to whom He speaks, to reform their Ways: which certainly was the absurdest Thing imaginable, supposing it a Matter which He knew, and represented to them, to be absolutely impossible.

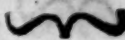
THUS our Saviour himself represents the Difficulty of a Rich Man's embracing the Gospel,

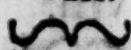
Gospel, and arriving safe at the Place of future Rewards, (a Difficulty arising from the strong Temptations there are in the Possession of Riches, to Covetousness, or Pride, or Luxury ;) by a Similitude taken from a thing absolutely impossible : and goeth so high, in the figurative way of speaking, as to say, *It is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Matth. xix. 24. And yet his great Design was to call these rich Men themselves to such an Use of their Riches, as that they might prove the Occasion of their greater Reward hereafter. Which shews that it was not his Intent, in those Words, to speak literally ; or to signify any more than his Sense of the very great Difficulty of rich Men's behaving themselves so here, as to attain Eternal Happiness hereafter.

FROM all this it appears that Things are, in Scripture, said, or represented, to be impossible, by an usual manner of speaking, which are only extremely difficult : and consequently, that the Word *impossible*, in the Passage now under Consideration, (taking into the Account likewise the nature of the thing

S E R M.

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SERM.
VIII.

thing spoken of,) doth not signify any more; and that the *Apostle's* Design in that *Passage* was no other than to signify the extreme Difficulty of the true Repentance of such as do totally renounce the Christian Faith, and publicly disown their Master, Jesus Christ, after they have received themselves, and seen in others, the greatest and most miraculous Proofs that He is the true *Messiah*.

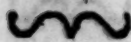
AND thus we see that, whether we consider the Persons concerned in this *Passage*; or the thing affirmed of them in it; it hath no reference to the Sins of professed Christians, continuing such; and doth not prove any thing of the Impossibility of their Repentance, and Acceptance.

3. THE *third* and last *Passage* of the *New Testament* which I shall mention, as quoted, and applied, by some, to the same purpose, is that which I read to you, at the Entrance of this Discourse, out of the same *Epistle* to the *Hebrews*, ch. x. v. 26, 27. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery

fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Ad-
versaries. Now, SERM.
VIII.

I. To put such an Interpretation upon this Passage, as to take away all Hopes of Pardon, from such professed Christians as have been, in any degree, wilful Sinners, even supposing them to return and amend; is to contradict the main Design and Tenour of the Gospel: as I have just now shewed. And whatever contradicts the main Design of the Gospel, cannot possibly be the true meaning of any particular Passage in it: whether we be able to find out the exact meaning of the Passage, or not. The Form of Expression, upon which the Supposition is founded, equally precludes from Mercy the sincerest repenting Christian, who hath once wilfully transgressed God's Law, and the *vilest* Sinner who is hardened in his Iniquities. So that, if it excludes any Sinner from Pardon; it excludes *all* who ever once sinned. And who can put such a Sense upon this Passage, as will render vain the whole Christian Dispensation; and debarr every one, who ever named the Name of Christ, from all Title to any Benefit from Him? This it is impossible to conceive, or embrace, as the Intent of
the

S E R M. the Apostle. And as for the true Intent of
VIII. it,



2. I T will be obvious, I believe, to every one's Observation, upon the reading the whole Context, that this *sinning wilfully*, in v. 26. is the total and open forsaking the Christian Assemblies, in the Verse before: which was accounted a renouncing and being ashamed of, the Christian Faith, in Compliance with the Infidel World about them. And that this *sinning wilfully*, here spoken of, is to be understood of a publick Renunciation of Christianity, and Apostacy from the Gospel, seems plain from the 29th Verse, in which the *wilful Sinner*, mentioned here, is opposed to one amongst the *Jews that despised Moses's Law*, and professedly opposed it; and is farther described to be one who hath *troden under Foot the Son of God*, and hath counted the *Blood of the Covenant*, wherewith He was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done *Despite unto the Spirit of Grace*: Phrases, very like to those by which the *Author* of this *Epistle* describes an open Apostacy from the Christian Faith, in the *Passage* which I last considered; and which cannot agree so well to any other
sort

sort of wilful Sins, as to that of a Depar-
 ture from the Profession of Christianity, and, S E R M.
VIII.
 as much as in Men lies, giving an open Af-
 front to that Dispensation, and bringing a
 publick Disgrace upon it. So that the *wil-*
ful Sinners, here spoken of, are not the *wilful*
Sinners, of whom we are now treating;
viz. those who are so, at any time, during
 their Profession of Christianity.

3. W H A T is affirmed of these Sinners, in
 the *Passage* now before us, is, that *there*
remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin: that is,
 either that the Force of *Christ's* Sacrifice sig-
 nifieth nothing to such as have renounced his
 Religion: or that there is no other Sacrifice
 of any Force, besides that which they have
 renounced; which cannot profit them, whilst
 it is publickly renounced by them. But cer-
 tainly this is said of them, considered as con-
 tinuing in their Apostacy; and not as re-
 turning sincerely again to their former Pro-
 fession. And this indeed may be said of any
 wilful habitual Sinners, continuing such, that
 the Sacrifice of Christ will profit them no-
 thing: but this, without taking from them
 the Hope of the Favour of God, upon the

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Altera-

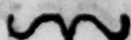
S E R M. Alteration of their Lives, and their coming
VIII. up to his Terms.

IT appears therefore, I think, very plainly, that the Persons here spoken of, are not *wilful Sinners*, who are such, during their open Profession of *Christianity*; and that, supposing the thing here affirmed, to be affirmed of all *wilful Sinners* in general, it is not an utter Exclusion of any of them from all Hopes, but as remaining in their Sins: and consequently, that this *Passage* proves nothing against the Possibility of *wilful Sinners*, of all Degrees, amongst such as profess Christianity, obtaining the Favour of God, upon the Terms appointed by Himself in the Gospel: *viz.* the forsaking what is evil; and the sincere, universal Amendment of their Lives, in all those Instances, in which they can discover themselves to have been formerly sinful, or defective.

AND it being so evident, from what I have heretofore discoursed, that these are the only Conditions of their final Justification, and Acceptance; and so plain from what I have now said, that, upon their coming up to these Conditions, they need not doubt of that Justification and Acceptance: what remains,

mains, but that we all shake off every Pre-
tense of Despair and Despondency, on the
one hand ; and every vain Hope and fruit-
less Expectation, on the other ; and heartily
set our selves to amend whatever is amiss in
our Tempers, or Practice ; to run our Chri-
stian Race in that Path which *Christ* him-
self hath marked out to us ; and, *by pati-
ent continuance in well-doing, to seek af-
ter Glory and Immortality ?* Which God
grant we may all obtain, for the Sake of his
Son *Jesus Christ*, our Lord!

SERM.
VIII.





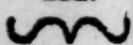
The Mistake of relying upon Faith, considered, &c.

S E R M O N IX.

E P H E S I A N S ii. 8.

*For by Grace are you saved through Faith;
and that not of your selves: it is the
Gift of God.*

SERM.
IX.



NOW come to the *Second part* of that *Design*, which I have, for some Time, had in View; viz. to examine particularly the principal of those false Pretenses, and mistaken Notions, concerning the *Terms* of our Acceptance with God, by which Men support themselves in their Continuance in their beloved Vices; and endeavour to elude the Force, and arm themselves against the Power, of those plain Texts of *Scripture*, and those convincing Arguments,
by

by which I have already proved that the S E R M.
Method laid down in the Christian Religion, IX.
by which Sinners may hope to be reconciled
to God, thro' Jesus Christ, is the actual A-
mendment of their Lives and Tempers in
all such Instances as they know to be con-
trary, in any respect, to the Law of God;
and that this is indispensably required of
them in order to their final Justification at
the great Day of the Lord.

THE *first* of these Mistakes which I shall
take notice of, and examine, is the Mistake
of those Men who appear to be induced,
by some Texts of the *New Testament*, to
rely upon *Faith*, or their believing in *Jesus*
Christ, and confident Application of his
Merits to themselves; and to expect Salva-
tion from this, considered as distinct, and
separate, from Obedience to the Moral Laws
of the *Gospel*. And amongst the rest, the
Text which I have now read to you, hath
been often heretofore, and is very likely to
be often again, alledged to this Purpose, by
Men who are thus disposed to lay hold on
any thing rather than heartily to set about
the uneasy Task of reforming what is amiss

SERM. in themselves. In the Examination of this
 IX. great and fatal Mistake, I design



I. To lay before you the plain meaning of *St. Paul* in the Text.

II. To shew that no such Pretense as this can fairly be built upon these, or any the like Words, in the *New Testament*.

III. To observe that *St. Paul* doth, in this very Epistle, as well as in many other Places, sufficiently declare against any such Pretense: as our *blessed Lord* did likewise before Him in the plainest Words.

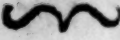
IV. To shew you in what Sense *Faith*, or believing the *Gospel*, is said to save us.

I. It will be very proper to lay before you the plain meaning of *St. Paul* in the Text.

AND, if you look into the *Chapter*, you will find that He is there speaking of the former Condition in which the *Ephesians* were, before their Conversion from a State of Heathenism, to the Belief of the Gospel; and magnifying God's Mercy, and the exceeding Riches of his Grace, or Favour, towards them, from the *first* Verse to the *eighth*: in which He therefore goes on to make them sensible of their Obligation to that God who
 had

had thus quicken'd them who were dead in S E R M.
sins. For by Grace are ye saved: that is, IX.
For it is very fit you should know and con-
sider that it is by the mere Grace or Favour,
or Mercy of God (as the Word signifies)
that ye are saved through Faith; that ye
are put into a Method, and State of Safety
and Salvation, by means of your receiving
the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is his own
Act, his mere Mercy, that you have Terms
of Acceptance offered you, upon your be-
lieving in Christ. The being saved in this
Method is by the Grace or Mercy of God,
I say; not of your selves, that is, no Con-
trivance, or Appointment of your own; not
owing to your selves: but it is the Gift, the
free Contrivance, and Offer of God to you,
that you should be put into this happy State
by the Gospel. This is the meaning of the
Expression, and that not of your selves;
not, as it may sound in our Translation,
and that Faith, or believing, not of your
selves, but entirely the Gift of God; (for
the Word that in the Greek is of the Neuter
Gender, and so cannot so easily be supposed
to relate to the Word Faith going before:)
but, that, or this whole Matter, this your

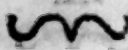
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being

SERM. being *saved by Faith*; this being called into
IX. a State of Salvation by the Gospel, is *not*
 of *your selves*; but the Gift, the Favour,
the Offer of God, previous to all Design, and
Thought of your own. Then follow these
Words, *v. 9. Not of Works, lest any Man*
should boast, i. e. And as the Proposal of
this gracious Method of Salvation was not
owing to your selves, and your Contrivance:
so neither was such a Favour merited at the
Hands of God by any past Perfection, by any
good Behaviour of your own, preceding it.
For, as I told you already, *v. 1. and 5. you*
were dead in Trespasses and Sins, when you
were called to the Knowledge of this merci-
ful Dispensation. And this I add, lest any
of you should boast, as if you had deserved
of the Hands of Almighty God, by your past
good Behaviour, so merciful a Dispensati-
on, so gracious a Proposal, as is made to you
in the Gospel. Then He goes on to assure
them farther that their happy Condition is
owing entirely to God, who had, without
any Contrivance or Desert of theirs, ordered
Affairs so by his good Providence, that they
were now Believers in *Jesus Christ*; and
had

had the Offers of Salvation, upon the Terms S E R M.
of the Gospel, brought home to them. IX.

W
THIS, therefore, is the manifest Design of the Apostle in the Text, to raise the Gratitude of the *Ephesians* to *Almighty God*; and to inspire them with all possible Regard to Him; by putting them in mind that they were formerly in an helpless and miserable Condition, *dead in Sins*, void of the true Life of reasonable Creatures; that they had no Thought themselves of such Salvation as had been offered them by the Christian Religion; that they had no Merit to engage God Almighty to make them such an Offer, and preach such a State of Reconciliation and Salvation to them; that it was of his *Grace*, or Favour, that they were *saved* from their former evil Condition of Sin and Ignorance, by believing and receiving the Gospel: for which they were obliged therefore to magnify the exceeding Riches of God's Mercy towards them in Christ; and not to attribute this Happiness to themselves, who were before this void of every thing that could be pleasing to Almighty God, or influence him to shew them so great and remarkable a Kindness. It is by *Grace* that ye are delivered

S E R M. vered from your former miserable Condition.

IX.  on; it is an Act of Grace that *ye are saved thro' Faith*, or put into a State of Salvation by believing the Gospel: and this being *saved* in this Method, and by means of this believing, is *not of your selves*; but wholly owing to the good Will of God, whose free Offer, and Gift it is. This being so manifestly the Intent of the Apostle in this Place; it appears from hence what I proposed in the second place, *viz.*

II. T H A T no such Pretense as that which makes *Faith* alone, separated from a good Life and Conversation, the Condition on which we shall be accepted at last; that no such Pretense as this, I say, can be built upon this Passage of the *New Testament*: which will lead us likewise to the farther Consideration of this Mistake; and to give a true Account of what St. *James*, and St. *Paul*, upon other Occasions, have affirmed upon this Subject.

A s for the Passage now before us; we have seen already that by our being saved by, or thro' Faith, is meant our being put into the true Way of Salvation by believing in Jesus Christ: and therefore that it cannot be
laid

laid upon any such Expression as this, that it S E R M.
is this Faith or believing taken by it self, and IX.
considered without any Influence upon our 
Lives, that will at last be accepted by God;
if we had Opportunity of practising Righte-
ousness, and have refused to do it. Besides,
every thing necessary to Salvation must be
represented as the Method that leads to it :
and because Faith in Christ, believing in
Him, and receiving Him for our Master, is
one and the first Requisite; therefore we
may be said to be saved by *Faith*, without
any such meaning as that other Things may
not be as necessary, and as indispensable, as
that.

BUT here it may be said, Doth not St.
Paul expressly in another place attribute Jus-
tification to *Faith* without the Works of the
Law? *Gal.* iii. 6, 11. To which I answer,
Doth not St. *James* in his *Epistle*, ch. ii.
14. expressly combat that Opinion which
some Men may falsely build upon this, *viz.*
that *Faith*, without Moral Works conse-
quent upon it, is sufficient to Salvation? And
is not St. *James's* *Epistle* of Authority with
Christians, as well as St. *Paul's*? And is not
this a Demonstration to all who acknow-
ledge

S E R M. ledge this, that *St. Paul* could not intend

IX. any such thing as some have fathered upon Him? But this is not all that is to be said. For it is manifest that *St. Paul* is there speaking of such Works of the Law, as Circumcision; and arguing, that such are not necessary, from *Abraham's* being justified by the eminent Faith which He had before Circumcision: and this against some Persons who would still pretend that the Observation of such Things was necessary to the Favour of God. Add to this, that *St. Paul* uses the Word Faith for the Gospel-Dispensation preached by Jesus Christ; and is only arguing that That is sufficient without the Observation of the Mosaical Ceremonies. But He is never arguing with design to make Men believe that a mere empty Faith, void of good Works, the Works of Righteousness, can save any Man at last: but saith much to the contrary in all his Epistles. But with respect to what is said both by *Him* and *St. James*, concerning the Faith and Justification of *Abraham* and of *Christians*; it may be proper to observe as follows.

I. S T. *Paul* saith that *Abraham* was justified without, and before, such Works as
Circum-

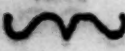
Circumcision. St. James saith that *Abraham* SER M. IX.
 was not justified by an empty Faith without Works of Obedience; and would never have been accepted of God, unless He had shewn the reality of his Faith by Obedience to the Call and Command of God. Here is no Contradiction between them. So likewise *Christians* will be justified by means of believing the Gospel-Dispensation, without any such Works as Circumcision, or any other Works of the Ceremonial Law; as St. Paul argued: But they will never be justified, and finally acquitted by any Belief in Christ, without bringing forth, as they have Opportunity, such good Fruits, and walking in such good Works, as the Gospel of Christ directs, and commands them to practice; as St. James saith. Again,

2. *ABRAHAM* was, for one signal Act of Faith and Trust in God, called by Him *righteous*; taken for such, and reputed as a Person free from the Guilt of his past Sins: as saith St. Paul. But it is manifest, saith St. James, that this *Faith* of *Abraham* was not such an empty Faith as some Christians pretend to rely upon: nay, that He would not have been justified finally by
 God,

SERM. God, unless He had, when He was tried by
IX. God, shewn by the Obedience of his Life,
 that his Faith was real, and sincere. Neither in this is there any Contradiction between them. So likewise it is true that a Christian, upon his first believing the Gospel, and receiving Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Saviour of the World, is acquitted from the Guilt of his past Sins; and reputed at this time, and for the sake of this *Faith*, as a just and righteous Person, clear from all past Guilt: as *St. Paul* always taught the first *Christians*, who were converted at ripe Years from a Life of Infidelity and Sin. And so likewise it is true that no Christian who hath Opportunity, after his Conversion, to practise Holiness, and yet continues unfruitful, or wicked; that no such Christian, I say, shall be finally justified and acquitted, at the last Day, for the sake of his believing in Christ; as *St. James* teacheth: but that the final Justification of such Christians depends upon their shewing their Faith by their Works, as *St. James* expresseth it; and upon their bringing forth good Fruit in their Lives and Conversations.

THUS

THUS may it easily be seen that these S E R M.
Two Apostles perfectly agree concerning the IX.
Necessity of a good Life, and of every
Branch of the Law of Virtue. But *St. Paul*
had to deal with a sort of Jewish Christians,
who retained an Affection for the Works of
the Law, and Circumcision particularly: and
therefore found occasion to tell them that
their Father *Abraham* himself was justified
without such Works; that his eminent Faith
was one time counted to him for Righte-
ousness, or Justification; that for the sake
of that Faith He was esteemed by God free
from all the Guilt He had contracted by Sin
before that Time; and that therefore it was
nothing but what was agreeable to that great
Example which they pretended to love and
honour, that God should accept such as be-
lieved in his Son Jesus Christ, without their
adhering to such Works as Circumcision;
and for the sake of that Faith; in Reward,
and for Encouragement, of it; should ac-
quit them from the Guilt of all their Sins
committed before that Time. But *St. James*
found that some misunderstood and pervert-
ed such Doctrine as this; and that some Chri-
stians began to pretend that no Works at all,
not

S E R M. not those of Piety, and Charity, were necessary to their Justification at the great Day;
 IX.  and that their believing in Christ would acquit them from the Guilt of all their Sins that they should commit after this Belief, and during the Time of their Christian Profession. And therefore He found it necessary to tell them that *Abraham* shewed his Obedience to God's Will in the highest Instances, and trusted not in an empty *Faith*; but, tho' He had been once acquitted from past Sins by an eminent Degree of it, yet that he did not expect to continue in Favour with God, unless by obeying all his Commands, and shewing himself ready to fulfil his whole Will; and so likewise that *Christians* cannot expect to continue in the Favour of God, or that State of Justification and Acceptance which their first believing put them into, without imitating *Abraham's* Obedience, and following his Steps in good Works, as well as in Faith; or rather, that there can be no such thing as true Faith without good Works, any more than there can be a good Tree without good Fruit.

T H E S E were the different Reasons for the different, tho' not contradictory, *Posi-
tions*

tions of these Two *Apostles*; and for their *SERMON*
different manner of handling this Point. *IX.*

And in this Matter great Account is to be had of the following Distinction; that believing in Jesus Christ acquits from the Guilt of Sins committed before such Belief; and this merely in order to a better Life for the future; which was *St. Paul's* frequent Affirmation: but that believing in Jesus Christ doth not acquit from the Guilt of any Sins continued in, after this Belief, and during our Christian Profession, but indeed add to it extremely, as *St. James* in effect affirms; and as *St. Paul* often taught. Which will appear more plainly from what will be said under the Third Proposition, *viz.*

3. THAT *St. Paul* doth, in this very Epistle, as well as in many other places, sufficiently declare against any such Pretense as that which I have been now examining: and this, in Imitation of his great Master who did the same before him. Our Lord, you cannot but remember, set himself against this very Deceit, by which He foresaw that many of his professed Disciples would endeavour to elude the great Design of his coming into the World. The Words you have often had

S E R M. in your Ears, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ; but He that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven :* a Declaration which, in other Words, expresseth this very thing, that it is not believing in Him, or acknowledging him for our Master, or applying his Comforts to our selves, that shall avail us at last ; but the *doing the Will of his Father* ; or a constant universal Obedience to the Commands laid upon us in his Gospel. This I repeat to you, under this Head, because it is so express a Declaration against Men's relying on *Faith* only for Salvation, or final Justification ; that a more express one could not have been made in Words.

AFTER having remarked this, I come to shew that St. *Paul* himself guards against the same fatal Mistake in this very Epistle, in which He declares that *We are saved through Faith*. He doth indeed profess to the *Ephesians*, *ch. i. v. 9.* that their being in so happy a State came not *of their Works* : but that is meant of their Works before their Conversion ; that they had no Merit to invite or induce Almighty God to offer them
such

such Salvation. But in the very next Words, S E R M.
IX.
v. 10. He declares that we Christians are *God's Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works*; that we are, by Conversion to Christianity, as it were a-new created by the Will of God, calling us to it; and created for this End, that we may perform good Works. So that you see He immediately guards against any such Notion, as they might weakly entertain, of his attributing our final Salvation to Faith separated from goods Works, in the Gospel-Sense of good Works. And indeed, tho' in some Places St. Paul doth vilify the Merits of the World and their Behaviour, before the coming of the Gospel; and tho' in others He vilifies the Works of the *Law of Moses*, with which some would have burthened the Evangelical Profession: yet no one can shew any one Text, or any one single Passage, in which He vilifies, and sets at nought, the Works of Evangelical Righteousness, or Obedience to the Moral Laws of Virtue.

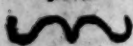
To vilify and decry the Behaviour and Works both of *Jew* and *Gentile*, before the Faith of Christ prevailed, was not to set at nought *good Works*, but bad ones; and only

SERM. to observe the corrupt and sad Estate of Man-
 IX. kind. To vilify the *Ceremonial Law*, after
 the coming in of Justification by *Faith* (or
 the *Gospel*) was not to vilify such Works as
 we are speaking of: but indeed to take Men's
 Minds off from Shadows, and Ceremonies;
 and to fix them upon good Works that are
 more substantial. Nay, when He ever
 toucheth upon the Moral Duties; with
 how much Vehemence doth He recommend
 them? When He speaks of the *Ephesians*, or
 other Christians, having improved in Virtue,
 since their Conversion to Christianity; what
 Commendations doth He give them? And
 with how much Joy doth He offer up his
 Thanks to God for it? But we never find
 him depressing that sort of Works; or set-
 ting up *Faith* against them; or taking off
 the bent of Men's minds from them: but
 pressing them into the love and practice of
 them with all the Earnestness possible. And
 then, if He mentions the Sins of any professed
 Christians; doth He do it, as if He thought
 their Faith would avail them? Or rather, doth
 He not do it with such a Spirit and Zeal a-
 gainst them, as if no Words were bad enough
 for them? And yet they had an easy Reply

to make to Him, had He taught them any such Doctrine, as that a strong Faith would save them at last, tho' separate from good Works. S E R M.
IX.

BUT particularly, in this Epistle, how many Moral Duties and good Works doth He press upon the *Ephesians*? And how solemnly doth He assure them, *ch. v. 5, 6*, that the Immoralities there mentioned will exclude all, who are guilty of them, from Heaven? And adds, *Let no Man deceive you with vain Words: for because of these Things the Wrath of God cometh upon the Children of Disobedience.* He puts them in mind, *v. 8.* that they were sometimes *Darkness*; but now *Light in the Lord: walk as Children of the Light.* For the *Fruit of the Spirit is in all Goodness, and Righteousness, and Truth*, *v. 9.* and so on. Doth all this, and an hundred times more of the same sort, that might be urged from his Writings; Doth all this look like the Doctrine of a Man who taught them that *Faith*, without Goodness and Virtue, would save them at last? Or rather, Is not all this plainly inconsistent with that Supposition? And doth it not all shew that it is impossible He should

SERMON. intend to teach any such Doctrine; however
IX. his Words may sound at first hearing?



I MENTION not here, what I have often mentioned upon the like Occasion, that it is contradictory to the declared Design of the Christian Religion to suppose any such thing as this. For if the mere believing in Christ shall save us at last; tho' during that Belief we have wilfully persisted in Disobedience to his Commands; then is it not true that He came to *call Sinners to Repentance*; then is it not true that the *Grace of God hath appeared to Men in the Gospel, teaching us to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World*; then is it not true that our Lord expects us to bring forth Fruit; or to be prepared for his coming by good Works; or that He will judge us according to what we have done, whether it be good or evil. But on the contrary, these Things are true; and most expressly, and positively asserted in the New Testament: and consequently it cannot be true that Faith, without good Works, will save us at last: nor can any thing be true, that takes away the
absolute

absolute Necessity of an holy, and virtuous SERM.
IX.
Conversation.

BUT now, after I have thus guarded against that bad and pernicious Sense in which any Christians may understand some Expressions of Holy Scripture concerning our being *saved by*, or through, *Faith*; it is time,

4. To consider a little in what Sense it is that Christians may be said *to be saved by Faith*, or by believing in Jesus Christ. And

1. THIS may be well said of Them, because it is their Faith, or believing, which saves them from the Guilt of all their Sins committed before this Faith: a Privilege which peculiarly belonged to the first Christians converted, at Years of Discretion, from a Life of Sin and Impurity. And therefore, this first Justification is often spoken of by *St. Paul* in his Epistles, and attributed to Faith. But this doth not concern those who have been educated, and instructed, in the Knowledge of the Christian Religion. The guilty Sinner in those Days knew not whither to fly from the Guilt of his Sins, till his Belief entitled him to this Favour; which God had annexed to it, and the Apostles always promised in his name.

SERM.

IX.

2. WE may be well said to be *saved through Faith*, because it is by believing in Jesus Christ, that we come to know and embrace those Terms which are offered by God for our Salvation and Happiness. He came to save us; and by closing in with his Proposals we must be saved: and this we cannot do, without believing Him to be sent of God, and receiving him as such. This, therefore, being absolutely necessary; we may well find Salvation attributed to this, which is the first moving Principle towards it; and without which we should not go one Step forward in that Way to Salvation which He came to point out to us. *He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life*; and without knowing him, and believing in him, how should we know the Way, or the Path, to that Eternal Life which He came to unfold to us; who otherwise might have wandered, every one after the peculiar Imagination, or Inclination, or Humour, of our own Hearts? As Salvation therefore, comes in the Method proposed by Christ: so may it well be attributed to believing in Him; because that alone can put us into the Method proposed by Him.

3. CHRI-

3. CHRISTIANS are *saved by Faith*, SERM.
IX.
because it is the Foundation of their Obedience, and of all their good Actions. It is the *Tree* which bears good Fruit; without which good Fruit there could be no Salvation: and consequently, what is so necessary, and so useful, to the Production of good Works, is it self entitled to those Rewards, and happy Consequences, which follow good Works. This is what St. *James* seems to think, that the only way of proving that we have Faith, is by our good Actions, *Ch. ii. 15.* Will any one, saith He, believe that you wish them well, or that you are willing to relieve them, if, when you see their Distress, you only tell them so; and at the same time deny them what you can afford them towards their Relief? From hence He argues, As there is no true Sign of this charitable Disposition, but the Fruit of Beneficence which it produceth; and as one who is always hard-hearted hath no Pretense to it: so, is there no Proof of a real Faith, but the Works it produceth; of which Works therefore, a sincere Faith is never destitute. Thus will even *He* allow that *Faith may save*

SERM. *save us*, by influencing our Actions; but no
 IX. otherwise.

~ LET any one likewise turn to the *xix*
chap. to the *Hebrews*; there indeed he will
 find an Account of the Excellencies and Ad-
 vantages of Faith; of its Acceptableness to
 God, and its Efficacy towards our own Hap-
 piness: but He will find that the Argument
 must be resolved into this at last, that *with-*
out Faith it is impossible to please God, be-
 cause without Faith it is impossible to live a
 Life of Virtue, or to do such Actions as are
 there recorded; and that by *Faith* is meant
 a vital active Principle, moving us to behave
 our selves agreeably to our Faith. And there-
 fore, with respect to Christians, *Faith* must be
 an active Principle, influencing and strongly
 moving them to such a Behaviour, and Con-
 duct; such a Life and Conversation, as their
 believing in such a Master naturally directs
 to. If we believe in *God* truly; we cannot
 but love and honour him above all things.
 If we believe in *Christ* sincerely; we can-
 not but endeavour to obey his Commands;
 observe his Precepts; and follow his Exam-
 ple. And thus shall we be *saved thro' Faith*
 or believing in Him; because this Faith, if
 it

it be sincere, will be the Foundation of such S E R M.
an universal Obedience as He requires of us. IX.

IN these Senses therefore, and on these Accounts, great Things might well be said of Faith in the New Testament; and Salvation attributed to it. But the great Point, in which we are concerned, is, not to be deceived in a Matter of such Importance; and to that End, not to interpret any one Expression of the *New Testament* so as to contradict the plainest and most repeated Declarations of it. Let the Conclusion of the present Subject, therefore, be to this effect. *Faith* is an Act of the Mind most acceptable to God. Faith in his Son saves us, as it puts us into the secure Way to Salvation, if we be sincere; and as it is the Foundation of all our Christian Practice, and of all our best and most Godlike Behaviour. This *Faith* alone, that is, the Method proposed in the Gospel, without the Works of the Ceremonial Law of *Moses*, is sufficient to secure to us our future Happiness: But *Faith* alone, that is, a Belief in Christ, without Obedience to his Laws; an empty, unfruitful Faith, accompanied with an ungodly Life, will condemn us at last. We are saved thro' Faith;

or

SER.M. or by believing in Christ; no otherwise than

IX. by being influenced by it: for Faith is required in order to Practice. *Faith* is indispensably necessary in order to Salvation: and so likewise is a good Life indispensably necessary in order to Salvation. Or, in other Words, a *Faith* working by Love, and manifesting it self by good Works, is that alone which will be of any Account to us, at last. *For as the Body without the Spirit is dead; so Faith without Works is dead also.* Now to God, &c.





The Mistake, of relying upon external Performances, considered.

SERMON X.

ROMANS X. 13.

For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved.



HAVE frequently observed to SERM.
X.
you that when Men are resolved to retain their Sins, and go on in their evil Practices ; and yet not to cast away all Hopes of future Happiness; they are ready to lay hold on any obscure, or mistaken, Text of the New Testament ; and to draw it to their own Purpose, without considering the Purpose of the Writer, or laying the whole Tenour of the Gospel together. One of this sort of Passages, relating to Faith, I considered in my last Discourse ; and endeavoured to shew that

SERM. that no Encouragement could be designed
 X. in it for any to rely on a bare Belief of the
 ~~~~~ Gospel, without the bringing forth those  
 good Fruits, and practising those Moral Du-  
 ties, which the Gospel it self recommends.

ANOTHER of the like sort, is That  
 which I have now read to you ; which some  
 Men of weak Understandings, or strong Pas-  
 sions, may be apt to separate from the rest  
 of this *Epistle*, and consider it so much by  
 it self, as to imagine that it was the Apostle's  
 Design in it to make the *Calling upon the*  
*Name of God*, or of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
 the whole of the Gospel-Covenant ; and to  
 affix Salvation to the mere outward joining  
 in the public Acts of Christian Profession,  
 and Worship. This is a very great Error:  
 and must prove at last a very fatal Mistake.  
 And tho' it be indeed such a Mistake as one  
 would think no one who considers the Na-  
 ture of God, or all his Declarations in the  
 Gospel, could permit himself to be guilty  
 of ; yet we find by Experience that many  
 professed Christians do at least seek for Ease  
 this way ; and find as much as any such poor  
 Pretense can give to the Conscience of such  
 a Creature as Man is.

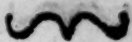
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IT cannot therefore be accounted unnecessary or improper, to consider the Case of such professed Christians as allow themselves in the Commission of known Sins: and yet receive Comfort, and entertain Hopes of future Happiness, from their devout, and repeated Performance of some outward Acts of Christian Profession, and Worship. They know that they continue in the Practice of Sin. But because they feel a Warmth of what they imagine to be Devotion in the Worship of God; because they frequent the public Prayers, or Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; because they hear his Word with some Attention and Zeal; upon such Accounts as these, they hope for his Favour at last, and perceive some Satisfaction and Rest in that Hope for the present: imagining perhaps that *St. Paul* is on their side, and hath given it as his Judgment, that whosoever should *call upon the Name of the Lord*, as they do, should be *saved*.

ONLY, before I come to speak particularly to the Case of such Christians, I must give you a true Account of *St. Paul's* Design in this part of this Epistle; which will at the same time lead you to the true meaning of

S E R M.

X.



SERM. of the Words of the Text: viz. that He is  
 X. here disputing against Two Errors of the  
 Jews. The one is, their seeking Justification by the Law of *Moses*; and rejecting the Faith of Jesus Christ, and the Gospel preached to them as the only Method of Justification: and the other is, their imagining that the Messiah, whom they had been taught to expect, was to be of Benefit only to themselves; and that the *Gentiles* were to have no part in his Blessings. These two Errors, you may see, gave St. *Paul* no occasion of speaking particularly in this place of the Necessity which professed Christians lay under, to practice all Virtue; or, any otherwise than in general Terms, of the Christian Faith, in Opposition to these Mistakes. It was enough for his Purpose, to put them in mind that, according to the Law it self, they must seek for Justification in another Method, distinct from that of the Works of the Law of *Moses*; that this Justification had been declared by their own Prophets to be of such a nature, as that it must be effected by means of Faith; and that the same Prophets had enlarged the Bounds of the Kingdom of the Messiah, and had promised this Blessing to all



all true Believers wheresoever dispersed thro' S E R M.  
the World. X.

THE first of these He doth, v. 4. *For Christ is the End of the Law*; that is, the Law it self leads to Justification by the Gospel: because, as it follows, v. 5. *Moses himself proposeth Justification by the Law upon no other Terms, but that of a perfect fulfilling the whole Law in every Tittle.* Now, none of you can pretend to this: and therefore you ought to be willingly led to seek for Justification, or Acquittance from your past Sins and Failings, by believing and embracing the Gospel.

As to the second; He puts them in mind, v. 11. that *Isaiab* himself, one of their own Prophets, speaking of the *Messiah*, had declared long ago that the true Method of obtaining the Assurance of God's Favour was by believing in Him, when He should appear; and by entring into his Religion. And then He argues, from the Latitude of this Declaration, that *whosoever*, whether *Jew* or *Greek*, takes this Method, *shall be saved*; alledging another of their Prophets, who had likewise, in speaking of the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, declared that *whosoever*, without any Ex-  
P ception

S E R M. ception of *Gentile* more than *Jew*, shall  
 X. call upon the Name of the Lord, that is,  
 truly receive his Religion, let him be of  
 what Nation or Family soever, shall be saved; shall be saved by this from the Guilt of his past Sins; and, if He be sincere in this Profession, will infallibly be put hereby into a State of Salvation, and obtain it most certainly at the great Day of Accounts.

I T very plainly, therefore, appears that St. Paul's Design was not to fix the Terms of final Salvation; or to tell Christians exactly what was required of them: but, in general, to tell the *Jews* that it was the Voice of their Law, and their Prophets, that Justification could not be by their Law; and that the true Method in which they must come to be acquitted from the Guilt of their past Sins, and made happy at last, is the believing in Jesus Christ, and seeking this Happiness in the Ways proposed in the Gospel; and that in this Method the *Gentiles* had as real a Right to God's Mercy, as themselves.

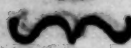
HAVING thus given you a View of the Apostle's Design in this part of his *Epistle* to the *Romans*; I shall now consider the Pretense of such as are led by this, or any other  
 like

like Passage in the New Testament, or by SERM.  
X.  
any false Motive, to place their Confidence in the external Parts of Religion, whilst they manifestly refuse to permit it to have any vital Influence upon their Minds; and openly allow themselves in an habitual Course of Sin. And,

I. FROM what hath been said already, it cannot but appear absurd to take a general Expression of *St. Paul's*, used upon quite another Occasion; and to apply it to what was not then in his Thoughts, or in his Design. He doth say, indeed, that the true Way to Salvation is the believing in Jesus Christ; and the external Profession of that Belief: in Opposition to such as sought for Justification by *Moses's* Law. But it is very unfair to argue from hence, that therefore *whosoever* doth call upon the Name of the Lord *Jesus*, tho' He live in constant Rebellion to his Laws, shall at last be made happy by Him; and that nothing but this external Act of Religion is required of Christians. So that *St. Paul's* manifest Design forbids us to apply his Words to what was not at all his Intent in this place.

SERM.

X.



2. IF the plain Drift of his Argument did not suppose this ; yet it would be the highest Absurdity to deduce any such Consequence from his general Declaration of God's Favour to such as should come in to the Profession of the Christian Religion. For suppose a Person should be commissioned to assure a Company of Rebels, that whosoever of them should resign themselves up to the Mercy of their rightful Prince ; and own him publicly ; and call upon his Name in their Petitions, and Submissions ; should be saved from Punishment : would it not be the most unfair and absurd Conclusion, if they should argue from hence, that the Prince required nothing from them but this external Act of Submission ; and that this would be for ever sufficient to secure his Favour ; tho' they should after this reassume their former Behaviour ; openly violate his just Commands ; and affront his Government ? Who would not join in condemning such an hypocritical Submission as this ? And who would not think it just, that their Punishment should be doubled upon them, even for the sake of this pretended Submission ? And yet, Are the Dealings of many Men with

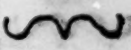


with God Almighty's Declarations, in the S E R M.  
least degree, better, or more justifiable? He X.  
sends his Son to entreat those who are Re-  
bels against Him, to be reconciled to Him:  
and He declareth by Him that whosoever  
comes in to Him, and believes, and calls up-  
on him, shall be in a safe Condition, and  
kindly received by Him. And they argue  
from hence, that this external Act of Sub-  
mission, or Homage, is enough; and that  
they may safely rebel against Him for the fu-  
ture; so they do but in Words acknowledge  
Him. Whereas the Submission required,  
is a sincere, and hearty Submission: which  
it cannot be, if it be accompanied with Dis-  
honour, Disrespect, and Disobedience, in  
Actions. In this Case, Men should be con-  
vinced by their own Maxims, and Princi-  
ples. For if they abhor the Man who pre-  
tends Friendship, or Submission, whilst he  
neglects all Opportunities of doing them Ser-  
vice; or perhaps employs his Time in af-  
fronting and injuring them: how can they  
possibly imagine that any such general De-  
claration of God's Favour to such as *call up-*  
*on his Name*, or perform any outward Acts  
of Religion, was intended to make Men

SERM. easy under a Course of Sin; or to be applied to any Performances but what proceeded from a sincere and upright Mind, full of a true Sense of Religion, and bringing forth such Fruits as Sincerity cannot be void of? So that were this Declaration in the Text separated from the Design of the Apostle; and taken entirely by it self: it is contrary to all the Maxims, and all the Rules of proceeding amongst Men, to interpret it so, as to take Courage from it to affront Almighty God by the Disobedience of our Lives; and to hope in his Mercy merely on Account of some external Performances of religious Worship. But, to proceed to other Considerations,

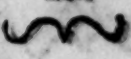
3. THIS *Pretense*, which I am now examining, doth really debase the Value of Virtue, in the Eyes of God, under the *Gospel-Dispensation*, below what it was under the Influence of the Ceremonial Law it self. When that Law was in force, one would have thought, that Men might then, if ever, have trusted to make themselves acceptable to God by the Externals of Religion; by *Rivers of Oil, and Thousands of Rams*: yet we find even then, the Question asked, *What doth*

doth the Lord require of thee, but to do just-  
ly; and to love Mercy; and to walk humbly with thy God? The Moral Virtues were the Things, even then, insisted on, when the Assistances, and Motives to them were not so great, or not so apparent: and when the Minds of the *Jews* could not but be more amused, and diverted from them, by their numerous and costly Services. And can any one believe that, under the Gospel, in which God hath declared a Day of Judgment to come, and pronounced his Wrath more openly, than ever, against Sin; and in which He hath promulgated the greatest Motives, and most powerful Assistances; that, under this Gospel, I say, God should put such a Value upon the external Performances of Religion, as to make insignificant the more weighty Matters of it? That He, who said under the Law, *What doth the Lord require of thee, but to practise the Moral Duties?* should, under the Gospel, say, *What doth the Lord require of thee, but to call upon his Name, or to hear his Word?* That He, who laid such Stress upon Holiness, and Virtue, even when He had consulted Pomp and Ceremony in the *Jewish* Religion, should

SERM.  
X.  


SER M. now in effect disengage Men from all strict  
 X. Obligation to that Holiness and Virtue; and  
 ~~~~~ turn all their Thoughts upon external Acts  
 of Devotion, and Religion, when He hath
 called the World to a Spiritual Religion, void
 of all that unnecessary Pomp, and Ceremo-
 ny? Who can believe this? Or who can fix
 so great an Absurdity upon the Christian Re-
 ligion? And if we cannot in Words fix such
 an Absurdity upon it; let us not entertain,
 even in our most retired Imaginations, any
 such Opinion, or Notion, as doth effectually
 lay this Scandal upon the most holy Religion
 that ever yet appeared in the World,

4. GIVE me leave to put you in mind of
 those many plain, unexceptionable, Texts
 of the *New Testament*, by which I so fully
 proved, in the former part of my present
 Design, that the actual Amendment of our
 bad Lives, and the Practise of all Holiness
 and Virtue, was indispensably required of us
 in the Gospel-Dispensation; and to argue
 from thence that it cannot be the Intent of
 any Passage, in the same *New Testament*, to
 fix Salvation upon any external Acts of Reli-
 gion, unaccompanied with Holiness; or paid
 to Almighty God in order to appease him
 for

for our Continuance in our Sins. Remem- S E R M.
ber particularly Two Passages: the one of X.
our blessed Lord himself; the other of St. 
Paul, the same Apostle who applies to Chri-
stians this general Declaration in the Text.

THE first is that in *Matth. vii. 22, 23.*
Verses: where, after our Lord hath declar-
ed that it is not the calling upon his Name,
without doing his Father's Will, that can
save us at last, He goes on farther, Many
will say to me in that Day, Have we not
professed in thy Name; and in thy Name
have cast out Devils; and in thy Name
done many wonderful Works? and then will
I profess unto them, I never knew you. De-
part from me, ye that work Iniquity. So
that, supposing Persons can even plead at
last that they have not only professed his
Religion; but done many Things, beyond
the common Pitch of Believers, by the Pow-
er of his Name: yet they are in a desperate
Condition, if they be found to be *Workers*
of Iniquity. And if it shall fare thus with
Professors of so extraordinary a Rank: what
shall we say to Those who trust to be accept-
ed at last for the sake of much more in-
considerable Performances? Must not they ex-
pect

SERM. pect as certainly to hear the same Sentence;
 X. *Depart from me, ye that work Iniquity?*

THE other Passage is in St. Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy, in the Second Chapter, the 19th Verse: *Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from Iniquity:* from whence it is evident that this Apostle could not be of that Opinion that naming the Name of Christ, or calling upon the Name of the Lord, in the Words of the Text, was sufficient for Salvation, without departing from Iniquity. For if He had taught any such Doctrine, it might have been easily retorted upon him by any professed Christian, who had a Resolution of continuing in his Sins, What necessity is there for departing from Iniquity, when it is declared that *whosoever calleth upon the Name of the Lord, or nameth the Name of Christ, shall be saved, without this Departure from Iniquity?*

MULTITUDES of other Passages might be alleged from the same St. Paul, for the Necessity of Holiness; and the Condemnation of Sinners at last: which all contradict the Pretense of such as would fix the contrary upon some of his Expressions. But I must
 not

not be always repeating them. Yet it is worth while to remember that these are the professed Christians, of whom He forewarns *Timothy*, ch. iii. v. 5. under the Character of those who *have a Form of Godliness, but deny the Power thereof*: whom he esteems no better than Scandals to the Christian Profession; *Enemies to the Truth; Men of corrupt Minds; and reprobate concerning the Faith*, v. 8.

5. IF we consider the Nature, Tendency, and Design, of all those external Acts of Religion and Worship, in which some Christians are inclined to place so great a Confidence; we shall find it a great affront to Almighty God; and the most gross Abuse and utter Perversion of their Design, to rest in them; to place our Hopes in them; and to make the Performance of them the Ground of our Expectation of the Favour of God, whilst we continue in the Practice of known Sins. For the great End of the *Christian Religion* is not that Men should pay external Homage to Almighty God; but that their internal Tempers, and the whole Course of their Lives, should be regulated by a deep and constant Sense of God, and of a Judgment

SERM.

X
w

ment to come. To keep up this Sense, and render it effectual; and to encourage others to profess, and carry forward, the same End; public Assemblies of Christians were instituted, and appointed, for the united Acknowledgment of God, and their Saviour; for the more solemn Obligation of themselves to the Duties of their Religion; for the praying to God, the hearing his Word, and the partaking of the *Lord's Supper*.

Now what is Prayer to God, if it be not a sincere Acknowledgment of his Sovereignty, and our Dependency; of his Authority, and our Duty? And what is this, but an Affront, if we know, and own, our Obligations to serve and obey him; and yet continue wilfully to disobey and dishonour him? Or, if we imagine to put a Cheat upon him, and to satisfy him with the *Fruit of our Lips*, whilst our Hearts are far from him, and entirely indisposed to render him that Service which our Mouths own to be due to him? What is this Prayer, unless it influence us to Obedience? And why can we be supposed to ask of God his Assistance, and Holy Spirit; if we be resolved not to make use of it,

it, and continue to stand out against all its S E R M.
Motives, and Offers? X.

AGAIN, What can we conceive that hearing God's Word could be intended for; unless for the Practice of what we hear? Now, suppose that a Servant of an Earthly Master should run with Zeal every Day to receive his Commands, and hear his Will; eagerly attending to it, and seeming to imbibe it greedily; whilst all the time He is resolved not to perform it, or constantly goes away to his former Course of Negligence and Disobedience: would not this be justly esteemed the highest Affront, and greatest Indignity, to his Master; and the utter Abuse of his Master's Design in calling upon him to hear his Duty? And thus it must be in Religion. Hearing can be only in order to our knowing our Duty; and knowing our Duty can be for no other End, but the doing it: and in all Cases, both of them are so far from excusing any who neglect it, that they are ever esteemed by Men the great Aggravations of that Neglect. *To whom much is given, of Him much will be required. He that knows his Master's Will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many Stripes:*

SERM.

X.



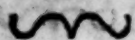
Stripes: proportionable to his Knowledge, shall be his Punishment. How contrary to some of his Disciples, who pretend to screen themselves with their Knowledge? They hear greedily, and know a great deal: and from hence argue that they are what He approves; and that this their Zeal in *hearing*, shall cover their Crime in not *doing* his Will.

THIS is what St. *James* warns all Christians against; the resting in the external Action of hearing. *Be ye doers of the Word, and not bearers only, deceiving your own selves*, James i. v. 22. and he goes on to compare a Man, who comes to hear his Duty, and goes away and neglects it, to a Man that looks into a Glass; and presently goes away, and forgets his own Countenance. The Man can consult the Glass with no other Design, but to see something relating to his own Face; which he presently forgets, as much as if he had not consulted it. The Christian can hear the Word for no other End, but to know his Duty: and yet, his Behaviour shews that he goes away and immediately forgets it. And thus the End of hearing; the only End to which it can serve; is totally neglected and perverted.

OF

OF such *Hearers* as these, remember SERM.
what our *Lord* himself pronounces, *Matth.* X.
vii. 26. at the end of the longest Discourse,
He is recorded to have made; and that, in
which it was plainly his Design to preach
Morality, and rescue Virtue from the Cloud
which had been cast over it. *Every one*, saith
He, *that heareth these Sayings of mine, and*
doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish
Man which built his House upon the Sand:
And the Rain descended, and the Floods
came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon
that House; and it fell, and great was the
Fall of it. Such is the Man, we see, who
builds his Hope of Salvation upon his bare
hearing the Word of God with Greediness,
without a conscientious Practice of what
he hears. The Woman in the Gospel who
heard with Delight the Words of Life, as
they proceeded out of our *Lord's* own Mouth,
lift up her Voice, and said unto him, *Blessed*
is the Womb that bare thee. But he said,
Yea rather, Blessed are they that hear the
Word of God, and keep it, Luke xi. 27, 28.
So ready was He to lay hold on every Op-
portunity of assuring his Disciples, that their
Happiness

S E R M. Happiness depended upon their doing what
 X. they heard, and knew, to be their Duty.



THE like may be said of partaking of the Lord's Supper: which was intended for the united Profession of our Faith in Christ; and the open Acknowledgment of our Obligations to live as becomes his Disciples. And what then can it be, to rely for Salvation upon the outward Act of communicating; or the present Fit of Devotion in which we find our selves, separated from, and void of, all Influence upon our Lives, and Practice: what can this be, I say, but to mock our blessed Saviour; to celebrate his Sufferings, and join in afflicting him; to own our selves his Disciples, and behave our selves as his Enemies; to contradict the Design of the Duty; and to fly to that *Religious Rite* for Refuge from the Punishment of Sin, which was instituted for a perpetual Memorial against Sin, and designed as one of the greatest Motives against the Dominion and Power of it?

NOTHING, I think, can be plainer than that thus to depend upon the external Acts of Devotion and Religion, for Salvation; without that Holiness of Life which they were designed to further and promote; is one
 of

of the greatest Instances of Ingratitude and S E R M.
Presumption that can well be thought of; a X.
formal Mockery of Almighty God and our
blessed Saviour; a Contradiction to the *End*
and Design of the external Duties themselves;
and a fatal Delusion and Deceit upon our
own Souls: it being certain that our Per-
formance of these external Duties is so far
from being an Excuse; that it will be the
greatest Aggravation of a wicked Life.

AND now, if these Things be so; what
must we say of some sort of Christians? They
come to these external Parts of Religion for
Comfort. With Hands, and Eyes lifted up,
and an Air of the highest Devotion, they
will call upon the Name of the Lord, per-
form the public Acts of Worship; hear his
Word with Greediness; and perhaps partake
of his Table. But here they rest. The same
unmortified Lusts and Passions which they
bring with them, they carry back again: and
return, day after day, to take their Rounds
of what they call Religion; in order to flat-
ter themselves, the more plausibly, into a
Fancy that they are not wholly devoted to
Sin, and the World. And if they be a little
easy themselves in this Method; they are apt

Q

to

SERM. to think that Almighty God is easy with
 X. them likewise. But it is high time to awake
 out of this Dream. It is the Paradise of
 Madmen; and a State of the deepest Folly
 and Misery. It is high time to consider what
 Religion is: that it is not the being profes-
 sed Christians; or Members of the best
 Church in the World; or Frequenters of
 the public Worship; or attentive Hearers
 of God's Word, that can at last avail us;
 without living as becomes Christians; with-
 out adorning the Church we boast of, by
 an exemplary Holiness; without manifest-
 ing a deep Sense of God in all our Conver-
 sation; and without doing that Will of our
 heavenly Father, which we pretend to hear
 with so much readiness.

AND God grant that all of us may so
 consider these Things, as to let them have
 their due Influence upon all our future Be-
 haviour, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord!
Amen!



The Power of Charity to cover Sins, considered.

S E R M O N XI.

I P E T. iv. 8.

And above all things have fervent Charity among your selves: for Charity shall cover the multitude of Sins.



THE Design which I am now S E R M. XI. prosecuting, obligeth me to take notice of such Passages of Scripture as any professed Christians may, on any Account, be apt to interpret to a very bad Purpose: that is, to the giving themselves Encouragement to hope for God's future Mercy, for the Sake of his Son: even whilst they continue in the habitual Practice of known Sins. And the Words which I have now read to you, as well as some others in the *New Testament*

SER M. *tament* to the same purpose, seem, at first
 XI. reading, and taken by themselves, to be as
 likely to be abused this way, as any we can
 well pick out : which, therefore, I now design carefully to consider ; in order to prevent any such fatal practical Mistake as may endanger the Salvation of those who profess the Faith of Jesus Christ.

THE *Apostle* is, in this Verse, after the most earnest manner, pressing upon the Christians to whom he writes, the most fervent and unconfined Love towards one another, *Above all things, have fervent Charity among your selves* : as his great Master had frequently, in the most pathetic manner, exhorted his Followers to love one another. From which Words, *Charity among your selves*, it is evident that He is not in this place, pressing upon them Love in the most comprehensive Sense possible ; or the Love of God, which is a distinct part of the Law of Christ ; but particularly the Love of one another.

NOR is it any Objection against this (which is indeed plain from the very Words) that the Form of Expression, with which the *Apostle* introduceth them, seems too much

much for this. For the Phrase, *above all things*, in the common use of it, is not designed to be understood, as making the thing spoken of, of greater Importance than every other Point whatsoever; but only to signify that the Matter is of great Importance; and that there was great Occasion, perhaps from some manifest Failure amongst the Persons spoken to, to press upon them this Particular, at this time, above all others. Thus, to give one plain Instance, St. James, in the *fifth* Chapter of his *Epistle*, at the 12th ver. brings in the Prohibition of Swearing, after the same manner, *But above all things my Brethren swear not*. Not that any one can imagine but that other Crimes, condemned by the Gospel, were full as much to be avoided by Christians, or were of a less heinous nature than this: but that He had some more than ordinary present Occasion to remind them of their Duty in this Particular; and in an especial manner to charge them not to be guilty of this Vice. So likewise, in the Case before us, there may be supposed very good Reason for St. Peter, at that time, to press upon the *Christians* to whom He wrote, the Love of one

S E R M.
XI.
~

SER.M. another, *above all things*; because they either had offended particularly against this Law, or were most likely to do so; without putting such a Sense upon this common Form of Expression, as if He must mean by it any thing more, and greater, than what his own Words profess; *viz. fervent Charity among themselves.*

XI.

THIS might suffice to account for the manner of his introducing this Duty: but it is fit likewise to consider that the Love of one another, considered as a Duty distinct from the Love of God and all other Duties; the Forgiveness of one another; the bearing with, and tenderly regarding one another, is so peculiar a Branch of Christianity; is so much insisted on by Christ himself, as the indispensable Condition of our Happiness, and that which He came down from Heaven in an especial manner to implant, and encourage in the Minds and Manners of Men; that an Apostle, and Preacher of the same Gospel, might well, in speaking to Christians, put them in mind, in a very particular manner, to regard this peculiar Branch of their Profession; that Love of one another, by which all Men were to know they

were

were Christ's Disciples, and to see them distinguished from the rest of an unfriendly, and selfish World about them. SERM.
XI.

It is, therefore, without doubt, as the Words themselves shew, Love to one another, peculiarly so called, or a *fervent Charity among themselves*, that St. Peter is pressing upon them with such Vehemence: and which he urgeth farther by this Consideration; *for Charity*, i. e. this Charity to one another, of which He is speaking, *shall cover the multitude of Sins*. With respect to which Words, all my present Design is to guard against any fatal practical Mistake, by considering in what Senses they may possibly, or probably, be understood; and shewing that no Encouragement can be drawn from these or the like Words, taken in any Sense of which they are capable, to induce Christians to hope for Salvation on account of their *loving* one another, or forgiving one another, without forsaking their own Sins, and entering upon an holy Course of Life in other respects.

INDEED, it is very observable that there are none less likely to stand in need of the Abuse of this Text than such as are truly charitable;

SERM. ritable; and sincerely love their Neigh-
XI. bours; and are heartily disposed to forgive
their Offenses against themselves: that none
have fewer Faults to cover, than such as
these; or are less likely to take Refuge in
their *Charity*, to indulge themselves in any
thing evil. For, Did any of us ever know
one truly charitable Man; I mean, charita-
ble in a regular and stated Course, and in
an eminent Degree; who willingly allowed
himself in the habitual Practice of any
known Vice; or in any sort of Transgressi-
on of God's Law? On the contrary, tho' we
may have known a very vicious Man do par-
ticular Acts of Liberality, and shew an un-
common Generosity upon some uncommon
Occasion; perhaps out of an ill-gotten Stock,
and to support a great Temporal Interest:
yet, did we ever know any Man, who con-
tinued in a course of a *multitude* of known
Sins, to be regularly charitable in a great
degree; and always disposed and ready to for-
give and overlook all Offenses against him-
self? But yet it is fitting sometimes to do more
than may be strictly necessary, in order to
take away all Pretext from such Men, as may
fancy themselves possessed of a Charity which
they

they have not ; and take Courage from S E R M.
thence to presume upon the Mercy of God. XI.
To return therefore, to what I proposed, 

I. I T is not at all improbable that the *Apostle*, when he declares that our *Charity* shall cover, or covers, *the multitude of Sins*, means that it will, or doth, cover the Sins of *others*; and not our own: which Interpretation at once cuts off the Ground of the Mistake, supposed to be founded upon this Declaration. And supposing him to speak of the Sins of others; it may be, as it hath been by several Interpreters, understood two ways.

1. I T may signify that our Charity and Love to others will incline us to *cover*, that is, to hide so as to forgive, and not to revenge or punish, all the Offenses of others against our selves. So that the *Apostle* may exhort the Christians to have a fervent inward Affection for one another, on this Account; because this fervent Love of one another will incline them to overlook and forgive all the Offenses of others against themselves: which is so main a part of the Evangelical Law, and so acceptable in the Eyes of God. Against this

SERM. this Interpretation there may be *Two Ob-*
 XI. *jections* raised.

1. THE first is, that the Phrase, which is rendered *to cover Sins*, is always in other places used with respect to God's covering our Sins; and not to our covering the Offenses of others against our selves. But this will not be of great force, because, tho' this may possibly be found true, yet, it is to be looked upon as a Matter purely accidental; and not arising from any Impropriety in applying the Word to the Sins of others: it being of that nature, that it is full as apt to express our covering, so as to pardon the Offenses of others, as it is to denote God Almighty's covering, so as to pardon our Offenses. Just as the Word *forgive* is used both of God's forgiving our Sins, and of our forgiving one another: So may the Word *Cover* be, in it self, equally proper in both Cases; and the Circumstances or Words of any particular Passage of Scripture be reasonably left to determine to which it is designed by the Writer to belong. If the Word which is translated *forgive*, had happened to have been generally used in speaking of God's forgiving us; this would not have been a Proof that it might

might not have been used, in one or two SERM.
places, where our Forgiveness of one ano- XI.
ther was spoken of: and the same may be
said with respect to the Word *Cover*; which
is equally applicable to both Cases. From
whence it follows, that no Argument can
be drawn from hence to prove that it may
not as properly and justly be said that Charity
covers the Offenses of others against us, as
that it *covers* our Offenses against God. In-
deed, if there were any thing peculiar in the
Word, which made it absurd to apply it to
any thing but our own Sins against God; a
critical Argument might be drawn from
hence against this Sense. But when the
Word is frequently used in many other Cases,
and applied to many other Things; nay, is
only in a metaphorical Sense used for For-
giveness, or taking no notice of, Sins; no-
thing can be urged from hence against using
it in all Cases, in which it is equally proper.
Besides, as I hope to make out by and by,
this very Word and Phrase is used by St.
James, with respect to the Sins of others.

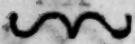
2. I T may seem to some a little absurd to
make the *Apostle* press Christians with so
much Vehemence to mutual Love; not by
declaring

SERMON. declaring the future Reward of it, but by
 XI. laying before them one main Effect and
 Branch of it, as a Motive to engage them to
 endeavour after that Love. But if we con-
 sider what a Stress the Gospel layeth upon
 our Placability, and Forgiveness of one a-
 nother; we shall not much wonder to find
 an *Apostle*, earnestly pressing Christians to
 labour after that inward Disposition, which
 will produce such an Effect; so necessary to
 their own Happiness. Let us labour after a
 fervent Charity, or Love for one another;
 for this will dispose us readily to *cover*, to
 pass by, overlook, and forgive, the greatest
 Number of Offenses of others against our
 selves: This, I say, is no small Argument
 to Christians, who know that this is the
 way to their own Forgiveness, and Happi-
 ness; and a Condition, without which they
 cannot hope to have their own past Sins
 covered by Almighty God. The like way
 of speaking is used by St. *Paul*, Rom. xiii.
 8. where He exhorts the Christians to *love*
one another, because *He that loveth ano-*
ther may be said to have *fulfilled the Law*:
 that is, because, if we truly love one a-
 nother, this will induce us to do no Mischief,
 but

but all possible Good, to our Neighbour; S E R M.
and so to come up to what is required of XI.
us by God, with respect to our Neighbour.
which must be a great and substantial Motive
to any Christian to endeavour after such a
Love, and Charity.

2. T H E second way, in which the
Words of the Text may be interpreted, with
respect to the *Sins* of *others*, is this; that,
if we have a *fervent Charity* for others, this
will engage us to seek after the Conversion
of such as are Sinners, and so our Love to
the Souls of Men, shewing it self by turning
many to Righteousness, will be the Occasion
of God's covering, or pardoning, their Sins,
who are so turned from a Life of Sin, to all
holy Conversation, and Godliness. This is,
indeed, a safe Sense of the Words. But I
cannot think it so probable that the Apostle
could mean this; because it is unlikely that
the Christians to whom He wrote should so
understand him: since He doth not make
the least mention, or give the least hint, of
that Conversion of Sinners, upon which this
Interpretation wholly depends. If this had
been the thing in his View; it is hardly pos-
sible

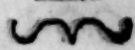
SERM. fible to suppose but that He would have once
 XI. mentioned what He principally intended.



I GRANT, indeed, that there is a Passage at the latter end of *St. James's Epistle*; which in Words is parallel to this in *St. Peter*: about which it is now fit to say something. The very last Words of that *Epistle* are these, *Let him know that He who converts a Sinner from the Error of his way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall cover a multitude of Sins*, the very Words used by *St. Peter*. Where indeed it is very natural to interpret the Words to signify, that by converting a Sinner to Righteousness we *save a Soul from Death*; and are the Occasion of God's not punishing those many Sins, which if they had been continued in, must have laid the Sinner open to the Divine Vengeance: which is a Consideration enough to move any sincere Christian to that Work. Nor is it any Objection against this Interpretation, that *saving a Soul from Death*, and *covering a multitude of Sins* in this Sense, are the same thing, in other Words; when the Apostle seems to propound them as two distinct Motives: because there are numberless Instances, in sacred and profane Writers
 of

of the best Rank, of the like Tautology to this; viz. the expressing the present Sentiment of their Minds, at the same time, after several ways, and yet still to the same Purpose.

BUT here we see, when St. James meant particularly to signify to Christians that it was by Conversion of Sinners that they might be Instruments of *covering a multitude of Sins*, which was a great and God-like Work; that He doth not speak of Charity in general: but very particularly and plainly points out to them that particular Branch of it, by which *a multitude of Sins* might be *covered*. And this is an Argument why St. Peter probably had not this in his View: because, if He had, there is no reason to think but that He would have said so, as plainly as St. James did; or, at least, that He would have given some Hint, sufficient to have led us to understand Him to the same Purpose. Nor is the use of the same Expression sufficient to shew that they both meant the same thing: it being full as proper for St. Peter to tell Christians that their Love to one another would engage them to forgive one another's Offenses, without

S E R M.
X I.


S E R M. out resenting or punishing them ; as for St.
 XI. *James* to tell other Christians that their con-
 ~~~~~  
 verting a Sinner would be the means of his  
 past Sins being covered, so as to be forgiven  
 by God. This shews us that, as the Word  
*Cover* is applied to several other things as  
 well as *Sins* ; so, may the Expression of *co-*  
*vering Sins*, or *a multitude of Sins*, be used  
 with respect to very different Cases, and  
 with very different Views.

T H I S, therefore, is the first general Pro-  
 position I lay down, that these Words may  
 be so interpreted, at least one way, very  
 probably, as to respect only the covering the  
 Sins of others from Punishment ; and not  
 our own. And if this be the Intent of the  
 Apostle in this place ; the Inference is plain,  
 that all Ground is removed of building upon  
 it any such Opinion, as that any degree of  
 any sort of Charity will *cover our own* Sins:  
 since, according to this Interpretation, all  
 that is here said, is that our Charity will  
 cover, and overlook, the Failings and Of-  
 fenses of others. Nay, if this be but a  
 possible Interpretation of the Words ; as  
 long as it is free from all Hazard ; who  
 would be so weak as to venture his Eternity,  
 and



and Salvation, upon the Possibility of any S E R M.  
other Sense, not so certainly safe, and secure? XI

But lest any Sinner should think himself too  
hardly dealt with; and not indulged and  
soothed, so much as he may imagine this  
*Passage* to have indulged him: let us pro-  
ceed farther, and, in the *second place*,

II. L E T us suppose that the *Apostle* intend-  
ed in the Text to exhort and allure *Christi-*  
*ans* to *Charity* amongst one another, by tel-  
ling them that *Charity* would cover the mul-  
titude of their own *Sins*: and yet we shall  
find, upon a due Examination, how small  
a Consolation this, or any the like Afferti-  
on, rightly understood, can afford to any  
*Christian* who continues in his *Sins*. And,  
under this Head, it is my Design to take no-  
tice of *three* or *four* several *Passages*, which  
may give unstable Men occasion of imposing  
upon themselves.

As to the Words of the Text; supposing  
it be affirmed by St. *Peter* that *Charity shall*  
*cover the multitude of* our own *Sins*; I say,

I. I T is highly unreasonable to interpret  
this, as if He meant that it should atone for  
the wilful *Sins* in which we still continue:  
because to say this of any thing, is to con-

R

tradict,

SERM. tradict, as I have often observed, the whole  
 XI. Tenour of the Gospel, in which *the Wrath*  
 of God is revealed, without Exception, a-  
 gainst all Unrighteousness. This, therefore,  
 cannot be fixed upon any obscure Words of  
 the first Preachers of the Gospel: whose  
 Business it was to declare this *Wrath of God*:  
 it being one certain Rule to go by, not to  
 fix a Sense upon any particular Passage, con-  
 trary to the main Design, and Tenour, of  
 the whole.

2. IT is contrary to St. Peter's own De-  
 clarations, and most earnest Exhortations, in  
 this very Epistle: who beseecheth the Chri-  
 stians to whom He wrote, *to be holy in all*  
*manner of Conversation, as He that called*  
*them is holy*, ch. i. 15. *and to abstain from*  
*fleshly Lusts which war against the Soul*,  
 ch. ii. v. 11. and the like. Now in vain  
 did He do this; and to no purpose were all  
 his Exhortations: if He can be supposed to  
 tell them after all, that tho' they should *not*  
*be holy in all manner of Conversation*; tho'  
 they should *not abstain from fleshly Lusts*;  
 yet they might be secure of the Favour of  
 God; that, if they did but take care to love  
 one another, that would cover all. So that  
 if

if we would not make St. *Peter* contradict SERM.  
and destroy his own Design; we must not XI.  
make him speak after this manner. 

BUT if any should say that St. *Peter* means it of a most comprehensive and extensive Love of God, and Man: I answer, that He saith himself, He means it of *Charity among themselves*; and that St. *James* hath used the very same Words of one single Branch of Brotherly-Love, which are supposed, by those who allege this, to be exactly parallel in meaning to these in St. *Peter*. This wholly takes away the Benefit of this Observation; and affixeth Salvation to one single Branch of Charity, distinct from other Virtues.

AND here, having mentioned the *Passage* in St. *James* again; I must observe of *that* likewise, that, supposing the *Apostle* to mean by it, that a Christian by *converting a Sinner doth cover*, or make an Atonement for, his own Sins; yet, it cannot there be understood of the Sins he continues in; but only of those which He hath forsaken: because the particular Branch of Charity spoken of there, supposeth the Necessity of all Sinners being converted, in order to the

S E R M. saving their Souls. If therefore, I convert  
 XI. a Sinner ; yet, if I my self remain a wilful  
 Sinner against God's Laws in other respects;  
 there is the same Necessity of my being converted, in order to the saving my Soul, that there was for the Conversion of the other, about whom I have been labouring. But if it were sufficient to convert another ; though the Converter himself remain a wilful habitual Sinner ; supposing that another should afterwards convert this Man himself from his Sins ; it cannot be said, as this Passage affirms, that *He saves a Soul from Death*, because it was saved before by his having converted another : and then likewise, all the Business any Man hath to do, is to endeavour to chuse out some Sinner, and by all means to labour his Conversion ; upon which He may be sure of God's Favour, let his own Life be what it will. But what then signifieth the *Gospel of Jesus Christ* ? and the Terrors of the Lord displayed in it against Sinners ; if such a Sense can be fixed upon any part of it ? It remains, therefore,

3. T H A T, if St. *Peter* meant the Words of the Text with respect to our own Sins, all his Intention was to say that our loving  
 one



one another; our kind Regards; our Placability and good Nature; our Forgiveness and Forbearance of one another, would engage Almighty God to forbear the Punishment of us, or to forgive to us our selves those manifold Sins, which we have ever been guilty of towards Him, in Time past: not those which we still indulge our selves in; but those which we have forsaken. For I must observe to you that this is the Peculiarity belonging to that great Virtue of loving one another, so as to be ready to forbear, and forgive; viz. that, for the sake of *that*, God will forgive us the Sins which we have forsaken: but that, without it, (that is, unless we forgive others, our Neighbours and Brethren;) even those Sins which we have formerly been guilty of; tho' we have forsaken them, and tho' God had, upon that, heretofore forgiven them; shall be remembered against us, solely on the Account of our implacable and unforgiving Temper of Mind.

IF St. Peter, therefore, speaks of *our own Sins*, as covered by our Love to others; I take him to say what our Lord himself affirmed, *Matth. vi. 14. If ye forgive Men their Trespases, your heavenly Father will*

S E R M. *also forgive you :* to the right Interpretation

XI.



of which Words, what I have already said will lead all Christians who are not resolved to impose upon themselves. The Interpretation which I mean is this, that, if they forgive the Trespases of others, God will likewise forgive them the Sins which they have forsaken, and amended: but, if they do not forgive others, that even those Sins which God had formerly remitted to them, on account of their first Faith, or Amendment, shall be again accounted for, and severely punished upon them in the other World. And thus *Christ* himself seems to have explained it in the Parable, *Matth. xviii. 3.* in which the *Lord* punisheth his Servant for the Debt which He had once forgiven him, only because afterwards He would not forgive the small Debt of one of his Fellow-Servants.

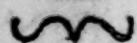
To draw towards a Conclusion; If our Lord, in his Account of the great Day, speaks of *Alms-giving* only; we see, by the forementioned Text, and multitudes of others, that it was not his Design there to speak of every thing necessary; but only to shew the great Acceptableness of that Branch  
of

of Charity to God Almighty; and what SERM.  
XI.  
strict Enquiry there would be made, at the Great Day, into the Practice of this Virtue: but that we must not so interpret it, as to render void his other plain Declarations about the absolute Necessity of all the other Instances of Goodness and Holiness.

IF, in any other Places of Scripture, or in the Apocryphal pious Writers, *Alms-giving*, or any sort of Charity, be spoken of as an *Atonement for Sins*; or particularly, in any of the first Christian Writers: it is evident how a Christian must understand such Expressions. Every thing that is commendable; Every singular Act of Piety, or Charity, may be, by a Figure of Speech, called a *Sacrifice*, as it is offered to the Honour and Service of God by those who perform it rightly: or an *Atonement*, as it may be said to make some Amends for a past Life of contrary or vicious Actions; just as a present Regard and Friendship, and the serving any Man in a very remarkable Matter of Importance, may be called an Atonement for a past State of Disservice and Disrespect; without supposing any such single Actions to be any Satisfaction, or Atonement, for multi-

S E R M. tudes of Affronts which we continue, upon  
 many more Occasions, still to offer Him.

XI



I F any Writers, of good Authority, have parallell'd the *Atonement* of *Mercy* with that of *Baptism*; this shews still farther that they could mean it with respect to nothing but past Sins, forsaken and abandoned. For, as *Baptism* atones not for any Sins, but such as were committed before it, and are utterly renounced in it; not at all for such as the baptized Person continues in, after his *Baptism*; so, in like manner, cannot *Mercy*, or *Charity*, by any one who useth this Similitude, be thought, or said, to atone for any Sins, but what are forsaken by the merciful Person; not at all for such as He still continues to be guilty of.

F R O M all which there cannot be any Consolation, or hope of Salvation, drawn to any such Christians, as still go on to allow themselves in the wilful Violation of any of the Laws of Christ: but, on the contrary, this Consolation of making some sort of amends to *God Almighty*, by signal Acts of *Charity*, belongs only to such as, tho' Sinners in Time past, yet have now actually reformed their Lives.

T H I S,



THIS, therefore, is the Christian Doc-  
trine about *Charity*; or rather, about that  
part of it which consists in Forgiveness of  
others: that, on account of this, for the  
sake of *Jesus Christ*, God will cover and  
forgive our *Sins*, which we have forsaken;  
and not without it. And this is so far from  
releasing us from the Obligation of forsaking  
them; that it supposeth it done, and adds  
to it the Obligation of our imitating God  
Almighty in forgiving one another: which  
God grant we may all do, &c.





*Of relying upon the Merits of Christ, for  
Salvation.*

## SERMON XII.

First Epistle of St. *JOHN*, Ch. II. part  
of the 1st and 2d Verses.

*If any Man sin, we have an Advocate with  
the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:  
and he is the Propitiation for our Sins.*

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**I**N this Passage, the *Apostle* declares that it is for the sake of *Jesus Christ*, and on account of his Sufferings, that the Sins committed by his Disciples will be forgiven by Almighty God. Now from this, and the like Declarations in the *New Testament*, many professed Christians have taken occasion to frame to themselves such Notions concerning the Merits of Christ, and the Sacrifice of his Death, and his Intercession  
with

with the *Father*, founded upon these ; as  
may comfort themselves in their Continu-  
ance in Sin, and take off from their Minds  
all that Uneasiness which might otherwise  
arise from the Reflexion on their own wil-  
ful Demerits, and Unworthiness. Which  
fatal Proceeding of Christians addicted to  
their Lusts and Passions, makes it necessary  
particularly to consider this Point ; in order  
to rectify so pernicious a Mistake. And to  
this End, I propose at this time

SERM.  
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I. To lay down the Doctrine of the *New Testament*, concerning the Merits of *Christ* ;  
or the Effect of his Sufferings, with respect  
to the Pardon of our Sins, and our future  
Happiness.

II. To take more particular notice of  
that unworthy Abuse of this Doctrine, of  
which Christians, in these later Ages espe-  
cially, have been, and are guilty.

III. To shew the Baseness and Absurdity  
of this Abuse. And,

IV. To point out to you the true, and  
good Uses that Christians ought to make of  
this Doctrine.

I. THE Doctrine it self, concerning the  
Merits of *Christ*, or the Effect of his Suffer-  
ings

SERM. XII. ings towards the Pardon of our Sins, and our eternal Happiness, I have heretofore in effect proposed: when, under the former part of my present Design, I shewed you that, in order to our Acceptance and final Justification, thro' *Jesus Christ*, it is absolutely required of us in the Gospel, that we forsake those Sins which we have been guilty of; and practise sincerely an universal Obedience to the whole Will of God, any ways made known to us. This having been plainly made out from the most express Declarations in the *New Testament*; it is enough to observe from hence, that, in the Words of the Text, *Jesus Christ is the Propitiation for those Sins*, which we carefully and conscientiously endeavour to avoid, and forsake; not for those which we wilfully continue in: that the *Merits of Christ*, so much talked of by some, are so great, that, for the sake of his Sufferings, God will accept to his Favour and Mercy, such as lay hold on the Terms offered by the same *Jesus Christ*; such Christians as relinquish and abandon their Vices; and come up to that Condition of universal Holiness required by Him; but not such as still continue, notwithstanding



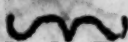
withstanding all his Calls, and all his Denunciations, to prosecute their own vile Lusts, and to oppose and contradict the Will of God. SERM.  
XII.

THIS, I say, most manifestly follows from the plain Proofs formerly given, out of the New Testament, concerning the indispensable Necessity lying upon Christians to forsake their Sins, in order to their Pardon; and to practise all Virtue, in order to their Happiness. For if these Conditions be plainly and expressly required in the Gospel-Covenant; then it is apparent, beyond Contradiction, that, upon the Gospel-Covenant, sealed by the Blood of Christ, and entered into for the sake of his Merits, there can be no Pardon, nor Salvation, demanded, or hoped for, but by such as forsake their Sins, and obey the Moral Laws of the Gospel: and, in other Words, that the Sufferings of Christ have actually procured these *Conditions* to be granted by Almighty God; that so those Sinners who have forsaken their Sins, and entered upon a new Course of Action, may obtain Justification from the Guilt of their former Sins, and Eternal Happiness in the Kingdom of Heaven.

AND

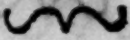
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AND who will not say that this is sufficient Satisfaction to any well-disposed Mind, to be assured, in such a way, that He is accepted by God, and hath a Title to Happiness? without which Assurance, the Mind of a considering Person must be perpetually disturbed with Fears and Jealousies. And who will not own that this is all that could be expected, or reasonably wished for, from a God of Holiness, and Wisdom, as well as of Mercy; to offer Pardon and Salvation upon these Conditions only? since by this Method He gives all the Comfort to Sinners that is possible, without encouraging them to continue in their Sins; and all the Discouragement possible to Vice, without making every Instance of it absolutely unpardonable.

IF any reply to this, that the Merits of so divine, and spotless a Being as *Jesus Christ*, are infinite; and therefore every thing may be hoped for from them: I answer, that the Question is not, what the *Merits* of *Christ* are in themselves; or what they might possibly have procured; but what the Gospel declareth that they have actually procured for all sincere Believers. Let them be what they will in themselves; They can be no more to us,

us, than what God Almighty thinks fit to SERM.  
make them, agreeably to the eternal Laws of XII.  
Reason, and Wisdom. The Mercy of God is,   
in a good Sense, infinite : that is, it is bound-  
ed by nothing but his own perfect Wisdom,  
and Holiness: against the Laws of which Wis-  
dom and Holiness it cannot act ; and beyond  
which, it would not be a Perfection, but a  
Weakness. So likewise, supposing the Me-  
rits and Value of Christ's Sufferings to be  
unbounded, and infinite, considered without  
supposing the Gospel-Covenant actually  
made: yet, when it pleased God to be mo-  
ved to make a Covenant by these Sufferings;  
the Merit of these Sufferings, with respect to  
such as God enters into this Covenant with,  
must be bounded by the plain *Terms* and  
*Conditions* of this Covenant. It depends up-  
on God's Will, and his Wisdom, what these  
*Conditions* shall be : and consequently what  
is procured for us by these Sufferings can be  
no more than what God sees fit ; and what  
He declareth, they shall procure for us. And  
therefore, I say, let the Merits of Christ be  
never so unbounded, before this Covenant  
is supposed ; let the Value of his *Propitiati-*  
*on* be infinite ; yet it is plain they are bound-  
ed,

SERMON. ed, as to us, as soon as God declares what  
 XII. He will do, and what He will not do, for  
 the sake of these Sufferings : which is the  
 Business of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, when it is declared by this very Person, whose Merits are so much pleaded by some, that God will accept returning Sinners, upon their Amendment ; and that such as continue in their Sins shall be excluded from his Kingdom : I say, when He himself declareth this ; He doth in effect declare to Christians, in other words, that He hath no Merits available for any who are not reformed according to his Moral Laws ; that, tho' He be the *Propitiation for their Sins*, yet it is for their past, and forsaken Sins ; that the Extent and Effect of his Merits, with respect to his Disciples is this, that, for the sake of his Sufferings, God will forgive the Sins of such as do at any time so turn to him as heartily to abhor and forsake them ; and make happy all such as do sincerely set themselves to the Practice of Righteousness, and make an actual Progress in the Ways of his Commandments. Let any one but read the New Testament with a well-disposed Mind ; and He will find that This is the whole Doctrine



trine of Christ and his Apostles, concerning S E R M.  
the Merits and Value of his Sufferings, and XII.  
their Efficacy towards the Pardon and Sal-  
vation of his Followers. But though this  
be so manifest, yet,

II. I T is as manifest, that there have been,  
especially in these later Ages, and still are,  
(in a very vicious Generation of Men) Mul-  
titudes of Christians, who are not content  
with this, that God should pardon the Sins  
which they have forsaken, for the sake of  
the Merits of Christ; but profess to believe  
that He will pardon all the Sins which they  
can possibly continue in, till Death overtakes  
them; if so be they can but have Time to  
declare their Trust in Christ's Merits to this  
Purpose; or, in the usual Phrase, to apply  
to themselves, with abundance of Confi-  
dence, the Merits of their Saviour, or the  
Promises of God made to Christians for the  
sake of his Son Jesus Christ. They seem to  
think that Christ's Merit excuseth them from  
attempting to have any Merit in themselves:  
nay, that it would derogate from, and dis-  
parage his Merits, if they should pretend to  
have any thing in themselves so much as a-  
greeable to the Will of God; that it would  
S be

SERM. be a piece of unpardonable Presumption in  
 XII. them, to pretend to imitate the Moral Per-  
 fections of God, tho' they are called *to be*  
*holy, as He is holy.*

SOMETIMES they urge that there is nothing perfect here; and no Man but what sins: and that, if they themselves stand in need of the Merits of Christ to screen them from the Divine Vengeance; so do their Neighbours likewise. As if, because the Value of Christ's Sufferings will atone for the Failings, and the forsaken Sins, of a sincere Christian; therefore, they must needs atone for the wilful and continued Transgressions of such as go on to disgrace that holy Name by which they are called, by a most unholy Life, and are every Day wilfully affronting their God and Saviour. How unaccountable is this? And yet there is hardly any thing more common, than for the most notorious and wicked Christians to profane his Merits, and his Sufferings, by openly professing their Trust, and entire Confidence in them. And, what is very remarkable, the more unchristian and profligate Men have been in their Lives, the more strong and confident shall you often find them in that which they

they call *Faith*, and in their foolish Trust in that which belongs not to them. So that, whilst many good Christians, thro' Excess of Modesty and Humility, or thro' bodily Indisposition, are almost sunk with the Imagination that they have not done enough to give their Hearts Ground for Confidence in the Mercies of God : you shall frequently find many of those, who have stood out against all the Calls of God to Repentance and Amendment, and persevered to the End in Vice and Immorality, as secure of his Favour at last, and as satisfied with their Prospect into another State, by the help of their groundless Confidence in Christ's Merits, as if the Gospel had been calculated, not to engage Men to *deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly* ; but merely to speak Peace, and Quiet, and Comfort, to the Minds of the most notorious Sinners, even whilst they know themselves not to be amended in any respect.

BUT how great must the Power of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, be upon the Hearts of Men, when they can influence them to believe, (as it hath happened to

SER M. some) that the way to glorify the Grace and  
 XII. Mercy of God is to multiply their Sins and  
 Vices; that the way most largely and effectually to partake in the Merits of Christ, is to add Sin to Sin, that there may be the more to be pardoned, and the more Thanks due to him who pardons? These, and the like Absurdities, contrary to the whole Tenour of the Gospel, hath a Love to Sin imposed upon some Men; as a Refuge from the Reproaches, and Forebodings, of a guilty Conscience; and these are often found to be fixed, without the least Ground, upon such general Declarations of the Value of the propitiatory Sacrifice of Christ, and the Merits of his sufferings, as that in the Text.

BECAUSE He is declared to be *a Propitiation for our Sins*; to be our *Advocate*, by virtue of that Propitiation, *with the Father*; to have *purged our Sins upon the Cross*; and to have *died for us Sinners*; because, in consequence of these Declarations, it hath been delivered and taught by the Churches of Christ, that, *by his one Oblation of himself upon the Cross once offered, He hath made a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, and Satisfaction, for the Sins of the whole*



## *Merits of Christ, for Salvation*

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*whole World*: therefore, they argue that S E R M.  
their Sins cannot be too many for such a Sa- XII.  
crifice to atone for; therefore they plead that  
these Sins, thus atoned for, are of all sorts;  
as well those which they indulge themselves  
in, to the last Period of their Lives, as those  
which have been forsaken, and abandoned;  
abusing the Mercy of God, and the Merits  
of their Saviour, to their own eternal Perdi-  
tion; as will appear, if we consider seriously,

III. THE great Unreasonableness, Base-  
ness, and Absurdity, of this Abuse. That  
Christians should so far forget the nature of  
their Religion, which hath, in the plainest  
Words, made an universal Holiness indis-  
pensably necessary; that they should be so  
far from being led by the Goodness of God  
to Repentance and Amendment, that they  
should rather take occasion from his Love to  
treasure up for themselves Wrath against the  
Day of Wrath; that those very Sufferings of  
Christ, which were designed as the greatest  
Argument to affright them from all Sin,  
should be made as it were the Incentive and  
Motive to them to continue in Sin; that the  
greatest Instance of Love ever displayed be-  
fore the Eyes of Men should be returned in

**SECT. XII.** Affronts, and Disobedience to God, and to his Son: These are such astonishing Marks of absurd Confidence, and Baseness of Temper, as cannot be parallel'd.

THE Nature, and End, of the Christian Religion, plainly established, must direct us in all our Interpretations of any of its general Declarations. And this Religion being holy, pure, and spotless; revealed by the Son of God from Heaven for the Conversion and Amendment of the World, and to teach us to forsake all Sin, and to live in all holy Obedience to God; the Wrath of God being often declared in it against all Unrighteousness of Men: it is impossible that any Comfort should be administred in it to such as continue in Sin; because this would be to destroy its own main Design, and to frustrate its own great End. From hence therefore it follows, that it is the highest Absurdity to argue from its general Declarations concerning a Sacrifice for Sins, and a Propitiation of invaluable Merit, that this Sacrifice will be available for those Sins of Christians in which they still wilfully continue: because this is to contradict the great End of their Religion; to make all Virtue unnecessary;

fary; and to turn all Christianity into a confident Appeal to the Merits of Christ.

SERM.  
XII.

AGAIN, It is the most absurd and unreasonable thing in the World, to fix such a thing as this upon Almighty God: or to suppose that He should send a Person from Heaven, to live and dye here on Earth, and to teach Mankind an excellent Doctrine; and at the same time declare, that it is no great Matter whether they imitate his Example, or obey his Precepts, if so be they do but trust in his Merits, rely upon his Sacrifice, and put their Confidence in the infinite Value of his Sufferings; that this shall be their Comfort here, and their Reward hereafter. Who can believe this possible, I say, that knows and considers what God is; an holy, and wise Being; at an infinite distance from all Sin and Iniquity? For what would this be, but to reveal a Religion from Heaven, with the greatest solemnity, on purpose to assure Men that Virtue is of no great Importance; and on purpose to encourage Vice, and Immorality in the World? I say this because, in truth, such Pretenses of Christians do manifestly, and effectually, tend to nothing else, but to render vain all the Moral Precepts of

SERM. the Gospel; and to bring a Contempt upon  
 XII. all that is substantially good in Religion.

AND if this be so absurd in any reasonable Creature, to fix such an Absurdity upon God; how much more absurd and intolerable must it be in a Christian, after this Revelation is made, in which the Nature of God, and his Hatred of Sin, are made known to him, to affront Almighty God with a Supposition which a very Heathen would be afraid to make? Nay, it receives a great Aggravation, when it is considered that it is by the Declaration of the Gospel only that we can know what the Merits of Christ's Sufferings are to us; and that in this they are so plainly limited, as to the Extent, and End of them, that a sincere Mind cannot mistake. I have already observed to you what is declared there; and, with how much Plainness, all who continue in their Sins, are debarr'd in that from any Benefit from the Sufferings of Christ; nay, how plainly they are assured that this very Gospel, and the Sufferings of Christ, shall be an Aggravation to their Punishment hereafter. And if, notwithstanding all the Limitations which God himself hath set to his Mercy, and to the Merits of his



his Son; these Persons will make a new Co-  
venant, and a new Compact, for themselves:  
what must we think of such an egregious and  
groundless piece of Folly and Absurdity?

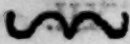
S E R M.  
XII.

BESIDES, how base and ungrateful a  
Temper must this proceed from; to make  
use of the Goodness of God, and those Suf-  
ferings which were the highest Instance of  
Christ's Love to them, as an Encouragement  
to themselves to take part with the great E-  
nemy of God and of Christ? How would it  
found in the Ears of any Man of the meanest  
Capacity, to hear Christians speaking thus,  
*God so loved the World that He sent his  
only begotten Son*; and this Son of God hath  
declared his Love in dying for Sinners, after an  
unparallell'd manner; therefore, let us affront  
him, and join our selves to his greatest Adver-  
sary; still trusting that his Merits, and Suffer-  
ings, will make him look upon us, and treat  
us as his Friends? Yet, after this manner doth  
every Sinner argue, who resolutely continues  
a Sinner; and yet pretends to trust in the Me-  
rits of his Saviour for Pardon, and Salvation.

To make the Matter yet more plain; put  
the Case that any Prince should send his own  
Son to a Company of professed Rebels; and,  
for

S E R M.

XII.



for the sake of what He should do and suffer amongst them, offer to be reconciled to such of them as should be influenced by this Method to repent, and return to their Obedience: what greater Affront, or Indignity, can one well imagine, than, if these Persons, professing to lay hold on his Offers, should yet continue to affront him, and disobey all his just Commands, as much as ever; and yet all the time plead before him the Sufferings of his Son, and argue that his Merit must screen them from Punishment, which was designed merely to make their future Obedience accepted; and which greatly increaseth the Guilt of their continuing such Affronts, and Injuries? Would not this Appeal to those Merits appear only a piece of formal Mockery; and justify to all the World the severest Punishment of those who should have nothing else to plead? Let us therefore,

IV. LASTLY, from what hath been said, learn the true and good Uses which Christians ought to make of the *Merits* of *Jesus Christ*, and of the Value of his Sufferings.

I. IN the first place, we may lawfully and justly plead before God the Merits of his Son, and his invaluable Sacrifice, as what He hath

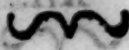
hath been pleased to declare that He accepts, S E R M. XII.  
as an Atonement for those Sins which we forsake, and abandon: and for the sake of this, we may beg, with a well-grounded Assurance, that He will pardon all our past Offenses, and whatever is amiss in our whole Frame; and accept of our sincere Endeavours after an universal Conformity to his Will in all Things. This is a sort of *Trust*; and indeed the only *Trust* in the Merits of Christ, which we can justify, or from which we can reap any Comfort, or Advantage: because indeed this is the only *Trust* agreeable to the Nature and Design of the Gospel; and to the many plain Declarations of the New Testament.

THERE is nothing in that sacred Book, of the great Efficacy of applying the Merits of Christ to our selves, in all Circumstances, with an undaunted Confidence. This is a new and modern Addition to the Gospel of Christ. But if we look into any Page of it, we cannot but learn from thence, that we have no Encouragement to apply these Merits to our selves, nor any just Ground of Satisfaction from them, unless we find in our selves a persevering Resolution to forsake all Vice;

S E R M. Vice ; and a constant Endeavour to perfect  
 XII. Holiness, whilst we have Opportunity: and  
 ~~~~~ that it is the uniform Doctrine of the same  
New Testament, that those who have wil-
 fully continued Sinners to the last, have no
 part in the revealed Promises of God ; nor
 consequently the least Right in the World to
 apply the Merits of Christ to themselves in
 particular, which are declared to belong only
 to such as have forsaken, and renounced
 their Sins. And if this be not true ; then it
 must be true that the Gospel makes no dif-
 ference between a virtuous, and vicious Life;
 but makes Eternity depend upon such a
 Confidence as the best Christians often want,
 and the worst generally have most of.

2. IN the next place, we ought all to
 draw a strong Argument against all Sin, and
 for all holy Obedience, from those very Me-
 rits, and Sufferings of *Jesus Christ*, under
 which some Christians would hide their con-
 tinued Iniquities. For if Christ be the Pro-
 pitiation for our Sins ; then what must Sin
 be to Almighty God, who took so severe a
 Method to be reconciled to Sinners ? and
 what ought it to be to Christians, who know
 this ? How hateful, and how abominable ?

If

If God so loved the World, that He sent his S E R M.
only begotten Son; if this Son voluntarily XII.
humbled himself to the vilest Death for us: 
how ought we to study to do every thing
pleasing to him; and to avoid every thing
which He hates and abhors? If so invaluable
a Price were paid; that we might be re-
conciled to God upon any Terms: how
ought we to be moved, by the Greatness of
this Price, to come up to all his Terms, and
Conditions; and not to think so long upon
the Price, as to forget the End for which
it was paid?

*Ye are bought with a Price; therefore
glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit,
which are God's: saith St. Paul, 1 Cor. vi.
20. The Price paid by Christ to buy Us into
his Service, is, in his Account, the greatest
Motive why we should serve such a Master
faithfully. Pass the Time of your Sojourn-
ing here in Fear, saith St. Peter, forasmuch
as ye know that ye were not redeemed with
corruptible Things, as Silver, and Gold, but
with the precious Blood of Christ, 1 Pet. i.
17, 18, 19. This is the Use, which the A-
postles earnestly direct Christians to make,
of the Merits of their Saviour: but they ne-
ver*

SERM. ver once advise, or command, or so much
 XII. as permit, them to think that they shall be
 saved by these merits, after a Life spent in
 continual Disobedience to his Moral Laws.

LET this Doctrine, therefore, be fixed in
 our Minds. The Merits of Christ's Suffer-
 ings are so great, that they will atone for
 the longest Course of Sins; provided we
 have forsaken, and utterly abandoned them:
 but of such a nature, as terribly to aggra-
 vate the Guilt and Punishment of those
 Christians, who take occasion to continue in
 their Sins, because *Christ* is declared to be
 the *Propitiation for them*.



*Mistakes about Man's Inability, and God's
Grace, considered.*

S E R M O N XIII.

II. C O R. iii. 5.

*Not that we are sufficient of our selves, to
think any thing as of our selves : but our
Sufficiency is of God.*



H E *Apostle*, in this *Epistle*, was S E R M.
led, by the cunning Manage- XIII.
ment of some evil-minded Per-
sons amongst the *Corinthians*,

to assert his own *Apostleship* ; and his own
Right to be their Director and Instructor,
as He had been the Founder of their
Church, and of their Faith. But lest they
should think that He boasted of himself
above measure ; as if from Him, considered
by Himself, came all their Good, and all
their Happiness of being made Partakers
of

S E R M. of the *Gospel*; He thinks fit in this Verse to
 XIII. obviate this Insinuation, and to assure them,
 that by what He had now, or any time before, said to that purpose, He did not design to arrogate to himself the Glory of being the chief and principal Agent in this Matter; but that it was to the great Original of all Things, even to God himself, that they were obliged for so great and unspeakable a Blessing. *Not that we are sufficient of our selves, to think any thing as of our selves: but our Sufficiency is of God.* That is, Not that We *Apostles*, of our selves, did or could, lay this Scheme of Salvation: not that it is to us that the Contrivance, and Administration of this, is to be ascribed. But our *Sufficiency*; our being able thus to contribute to your Happiness, and thus successfully to minister to your good, by preaching the *Gospel*, is owing to God.

THAT this is the meaning of the *Apostle*, in these Words, will be evident to any one who will be at the Pains to lay together what goes before, and what follows after this Verse. For whoever doth that, will find that the *Apostle* is not here speaking, or thinking, of the Duty ordinarily required of Christians,

Christians, in order to their final Acceptance; but of a Subject entirely different from this; viz. of the Work of an *Apostle*; of the first Original of that *Scheme* of *Salvation* which the *Apostles* preached to the World; and of that Knowledge and Sufficiency which the first Preachers of the Gospel had, in order to the Performance of their great Work. But tho' this be so plainly the meaning of the Words; yet many Christians, of later Ages, have been led from this Text, and others of the like Sound, into such Errors, as tend, in their own natures, to obstruct and hinder the great Design of the Gospel; and to make Men easy and careless about the Performance of those Terms of Acceptance, Holiness and universal Righteousness, which are so plainly required in the Gospel.

It is therefore, of great Importance, to examine, and confute such pernicious Mistakes; and to shew that there is nothing in the *New Testament* to favour them. The Mistakes at which I now particularly point, are such as are founded upon a very fatal Notion of the Weakness, and Inability of Man; and of the part which Almighty God is to

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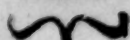
act

S E R M. act in the Business of Reformation, and
 XIII. Holiness. For many Persons have not been
 content with saying that their Natures are
 weak and frail; too easily carried away by
 the Force of that multitude of Trials which
 surround them in this State; that the *Flesh*
is weak, and their Inclinations directed with
 a strong Bias towards Sin and Wickedness;
 but are likewise pleased with representing
 themselves in such a State of Inability, and
 Insufficiency, as that all Motives, and all
 Calls to Repentance are in vain; in such a
 State, as that it is impossible for them, by
 any Act of their own Mind, either to pray
 effectually to God; or successfully to bear
 any part, in the great Work of their Salva-
 tion, themselves.

So likewise, with respect to *Almighty*
God; they are not content with acknowledg-
 ing that the great Design of their Happiness
 is owing originally to Him, and is his Work;
 or that all their Powers and Faculties come
 from Him, who made them what they are;
 or that He is ready to assist their Endeavours,
 whenever they exert them; to answer their
 sincere Prayers, and to impart to them what-
 ever is necessary to their successful running
 the

the Race that is set before them: but they take a sort of Delight in thinking, and speaking, as if Almighty God were to do all for them; as if He, in his own Time, will irresistibly move them to do his Will; and as if, unless he thus interposeth, they have no Power, or Strength, to do any thing towards forsaking those Sins to which they have made themselves captive.

S E R M.
XIII.

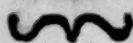


IN these Senses, do they think it for their Purpose, to understand the Words of the Text, and some other Expressions of the *New Testament*, concerning the Insufficiency, and Weakness of Man; and the Sufficiency, and Power of God, in the Matter of Salvation. In order, therefore, to put a Stop to such Notions as these, which naturally tend to render Men indisposed to all Attempts, and Endeavours to do their Duty; I have the following Observations to make.

I. S T. *Paul* himself builds no such Doctrine upon that great and strong Notion He had of his own Insufficiency; and of the Sufficiency of God. This *Insufficiency*, I have shewn already, had reference to the Work of his *Apostleship*; to and his successful Performance of it; that is, to his publishing, and

S E R M.

XIII.



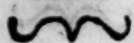
enforcing, the Terms of Salvation, amidst a Thousand Difficulties, and a World of Hazards. But because this great Work of Redemption was originally the sole Design and Contrivance of Heaven; because his being an *Apostle* was owing immediately to God; and the Success of his Labours, and his own Courage and Conduct in his Office, depended upon the Providence, and the Favour of God: He doth not presently infer that nothing was to be done by Himself, considered as distinct from his great Patron. But, in this very *Epistle*, He represents Himself, and the other *Apostles*, as *Workers together with God*, ch. vi. 1. and often speaks of his indefatigable Endeavours to answer the Ends of his Office. And if He were a *Worker together with God*; He had certainly a part of his own, distinct from that of *Almighty God*, in this great Affair. And consequently, as He had God Almighty's *Sufficiency* to support Him, and make up his Deficiencies; so He had likewise some Strength and Ability of his own, for his own part. And as *God* was the *Architect*; the chief Builder, Director, and Encourager of the whole;

whole ; so likewise was the *Apostle*, a *Worker*, under, and *together with*, Him. SERM.
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IF, therefore, in that great Work of the *Apostleship*, encompassed at that time with so many Difficulties and Hazards, St. Paul did not mean by such Expressions to signify that he himself had no part to act, but as forced, and impelled irresistibly, by *God Almighty* ; but left a part for himself, as well as gave to God the chief Part, and Glory, in it all : much less will it follow, that he meant these and the like Expressions, to signify that, in the Business of every ordinary Christian, so much less difficult than that in which he was engaged, God Almighty was to do all, without the Concurrence of the Man himself ; and without his having Strength and Power to bear any part in his own Happiness. If the *Apostle* had such Power, as to be a *Worker together with* God, in that vast and boundless Office ; much more may Christians, in their ordinary Spheres of Action, be supposed to have Ability to bear some part in the carrying forward their own Perfection here, and Salvation hereafter.

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2. BUT supposing that St. *Paul* had referred the whole to Almighty God, in the literal, and strict Sense of the Word; and left himself nothing but a passive Character; and represented himself as irresistibly moved by his Almighty Arm: this having been said by him merely with respect to so great, and difficult a Task, as was that of an *Apostle*, in those first Days; it will not at all follow from hence, that the same is true, with respect to an Office, or Business, not so difficult, and hazardous. It will not so much as follow, that the same is true with respect to succeeding Ministers, and Pastors of the Church, in the ordinary Course of God's Providence; much less will it follow, with respect to the Body of Christians, whose Task doth not take in so great a Compass. It doth not follow that because Almighty God takes the whole upon himself, in a great, and immense Difficulty; therefore, He likewise takes the whole upon himself, in a Matter of much less Difficulty, and of a much more confined Importance.

3. THE Assistance which God affords to Christians, and the part which He bears in the Work of their Salvation, is so far from being

being a Proof that they can do nothing towards it themselves; that it is a most powerful Argument, and made use of in the *New Testament*, to engage them to do something for themselves. *Work out your own Salvation*, saith the same St. Paul, *with Fear and Trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will, and to do*, Phil. ii. 12, 13. On this very account, use your own Strength and Power, in the Affair of Religion; because God himself, in the Christian Dispensation, affords you his Influences, and his Assistances. And indeed, what more powerful Motive can there be thought of, to engage us to hearty and uninterrupted Labour, in our Christian Warfare, than this, that we are carrying forward a Work, in which God himself is engaged; that if it fail at last, the gracious Design of God will fail thro' our Negligence; that we have so powerful an Assistant and Patron, that the Difficulty of our Work need not discourage us from attempting it, or persevering in it; that we are *Fellow-workers* together with God; and therefore should be animated to exert our selves, as all are incited to do under the Eye and Encouragement of their

SER M. Superiors; and to do even more Work,
 XIII. and with more sollicitous Concern, than we
 could do, if we had not such a *Patron*, and
 such an *Assistent*?

To take away the Despair of Success, is so far from encouraging the Idleness or Neglect of any Person engaged in an Enterprize, that it is absolutely necessary towards their having any Heart, and Courage, for the Execution of it. This *God Almighty* takes from us, by representing himself as our Director, and Assister: and it is this which should fill us with more Concern lest the Enterprize should fail; and animate us with a stronger Resolution to use all our Endeavours. It is because we have such Hope of good Success, under the Patronage of so much Wisdom, and so much Power, that we should be much more vigorous, and resolute, than if we had not such an Encouragement as is included in *God's working in us both to will, and to do.* And,

4. How weak soever we may be; since it is plain, from what I have already said, that the Gospel doth not suppose us in a State of utter Inability to bear any part in our own Happiness: I say, our Weakness, or
 Inability

Inability to perform the whole, our selves, S E R M.
is no Argument why we should leave the XIII.
whole to Almighty God; and not think our
selves obliged to work together with Him.
And yet this seems to have been the Ground
of Mistake in this Case, that the Evangelical
Dispensation, and consequently, the Salva-
tion of Men, is represented as the sole Con-
trivance and Work of God, in which we
bear no part, and were incapable of bear-
ing any. This without doubt is true; that
we could not have thought of, or entered
into, such a Scheme for our own Happiness.
But it doth not follow that, when He offers
this Happiness to us, He offers it to Beings,
as incapable of laying hold on it, as the very
Stocks and Stones. It doth not follow, be-
cause our great Benefactor prevents us with
his Kindness, and voluntarily offers us his
Benevolence, and his helping Hand to free
us from the greatest of Evils, and enstate us
in the most complete Happiness; that there-
fore we are unable to accept this Kindness,
and to help forward so good, and merciful
a Design. No, let us acknowledge, as much
as we please, our own Insufficiency, and
Inability, for so God-like a Work as that of
recovering

S E R M. recovering us from Misery to Happiness; to
 XIII. the Glory of Him who is the *Author, and*
 ~~~~~ *Finisher of our* Salvation: but let us not  
 sooth our selves in Vice, under the Pretext  
 of a false Humility; and look upon our  
 selves as too weak to do the least thing to-  
 wards our own Pardon, and Salvation. For  
 our Inability to do some Things, doth not  
 infer our Inability to do others; nor doth our  
 being incapable of the whole, taken all toge-  
 ther, prove that we are incapable of any part.

B U T, in return to what hath been said  
 under these two last Heads, I am sensible  
 that some other Expressions of the *New Tes-  
 tament* may be objected. As,

I. I T may be said that the whole of this  
 great Work of Repentance, and Salvation,  
 seems, in some Expressions, to be ascribed  
 to God: and He to be represented as the sole  
 Agent in it. In answer to this I have al-  
 ready observed that the Contrivance, and  
 Scheme, of the whole Dispensation, in  
 which we have Salvation offered us, and  
 the making and proclaiming the Terms of  
 it, are wholly owing to Him, and to his  
 Goodness; previous to any Work, or Me-  
 rit, of ours: and consequently, it is no  
 Wonder

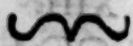
Wonder that *this* is wholly attributed to Him, which is indeed, literally speaking, solely, and wholly, his Work. When any such Expressions, therefore, come in our way, we should consider whether the Writer be not speaking of this *Christian Dispensation*, as the Work of God: And if he be, we may be sure that this signifieth nothing to the present Question. For God might be the sole Author of this Offer, and this whole Scheme: and yet we may have Strength and Ability to do something towards the laying hold on the Terms of it; towards the complying sincerely with his Offers; and towards the finding out, and Performance, of his Will.

BUT if such Expressions should be used, concerning *Almighty God*, with respect to our receiving Benefit from this Dispensation, and the like; it is to be considered farther, that there is nothing more common in all sorts of Writers, than to speak of the chief Leader, Director, and Performer, of any Work, as if no other deserved to be mentioned. Thus God Almighty's Favour and Holy Spirit, being the great Support and Strength of Christians; it is no wonder if, according to the general Custom of speaking

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ing, the great Affair of Salvation be spoken of, as all owing to that. Just as any great Action, tho' executed by a great many in Conjunction, is yet frequently said to be owing to *Him* particularly, who was the great Disposer of all Things concurring to it; and had the chief Hand in it: so may it be in this Case, without inferring that, strictly speaking, no one besides him hath any Concern in it. It is because, comparatively speaking, He bears the chief part; and because without his favourable Concurrence nothing could successfully be done, that He may well, agreeably to the Rules of speaking, be sometimes represented as the Doer of the whole. But it doth not at all follow, from such customary Forms of speaking, that He neither expects, nor requires, the Concurrence, and hearty Endeavours, and Pains, of those to whom He is so good.

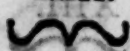
AGAIN, It is proper to consider that whatever Powers, and Capacities, we have, are originally his Gift, and therefore all the good Effects of them may justly be ascribed to *Him*, as to the first and original Author of all that we have, and all that we can do; that it is to the Concurrence of his daily Providence,



vidence, and to the Disposition of all Circumstances, which is his Work, that we are indebted for every thing. Without this, we could not have the Opportunity, or Possibility, of knowing the *Terms of Christian Salvation*; or of complying with them. And therefore, it may justly be ascribed to Him, whatsoever is done towards our Happiness, even by our selves. And, in this Sense, without *Him*, we could neither think, nor act, to any purpose, in our great and most important Concern. But all this is very consistent with our being moved, after the manner of free Agents, by the Motives he proposeth; and by the Circumstances in which he is pleased to put us.

AND then, in all those parts of our Christian Duty, and in all those Cases, in which his Interposition is requisite to our Success, He hath promised his Holy Spirit to them that ask it, and make use of it: a Spirit, which, as it was to be the Support of his *Apostles* in their greater Work; so is it, in proportion, to be the Guide, and Assister of all Christians, who are sincerely desirous to follow it. But this implies in it that we are able, at least, to ask for this *unspeakable Gift*  
of

SERM.  
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*of God*: because otherwise it would be but mocking us to promise it to our Prayers. It implies indeed that this Spirit is the great Agent; the great Help to Perfection; and to a Renovation of the Mind of Sinners; and a Reformation of their Practices; so, that great things may be spoken of it: but it doth not imply that those to whom it is given are only the mechanical Instruments of it, or any thing to that effect; any more than the Assistance of one Man granted to another, in any Affair, in which without it he could not succeed, supposeth that this other must do nothing himself, and make no Steps, as a voluntary Agent, towards the accomplishing his own Ends.

WHATEVER, therefore, is said, in the *New Testament*, or supposed to be said, of *Almighty God*, as the *sole Author* of all relating to our Salvation, may, we see, very justly be accounted for, by the common Usage of speaking, without drawing so strange and absurd a Consequence from it, as de-vests Men of all Pretense to any part in it: especially considering, in the last Place, that, in the same *New Testament*, the greatest Care is taken, when any parts of it are addressed

dress'd to Christians themselves, to urge, SERM.  
XIII.  
and press, and incite them, as free Agents, to the Performance of their Duty; to deal with them as if on themselves, and on their own Endeavours, depended their Happiness; to charge them not to be so ungrateful to God, as to think of leaving all to Him to do: and to threaten them with eternal Damnation, if they neglect to do what is required of them. This likewise will help us,

2. To answer the *Objection* which may be made to what I have said concerning the part of Christians themselves in the Affair of Salvation: *viz.* That the *New Testament* seems to represent them in a *dead* and *lifeless* Condition; unable to help themselves; and the like. For, supposing this, yet, that these, and the like, Expressions were not designed to be understood in any Sense contrary to what I have said, is plain from those multitudes of Addresses, and Appeals, to Christians themselves; and from those many earnest Entreaties, Motives, Promises, Threatnings, in the same *New Testament*: all contrived to make them exert themselves; all such as are inconsistent with the Supposition that *God* will help them without their

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SER M. own Help; or that they are not able to do  
 XIII. that part, which God requireth, and incite-  
 ~~~~~ teth, them to do.

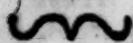
BUT I must remark farther, that, if you consider those Passages which have this Appearance, you will find that they are chiefly, if not always, such as respect only the State of Mankind, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, before the Light of the Gospel brake in upon them; and before the Offers of Salvation were made, or accepted. Before that, the World was universally *dead in Trespasses and Sins*: and the Motives, to induce them to arise from this Death, came solely from God; not from themselves. But yet the very offering them *Spiritual Life*, supposed them capable of accepting it; the very pressing, and inciting, them to revive from that Death of Sin, supposeth that they could do what they were so incited to. Almighty God quickened them by these Motives, and Offers; but then, even in this, their accepting and complying with them must be, in part, their own Work; or it could never be made their Reward. As a Man that is stupid and insensible, in some considerable worldly Concerns, may be said to be *dead*,
 and

and *lifeless*; and as the Motives, and Arguments, and Persuatives, of Men can quicken and put Life into him; actuating him into good Resolutions, and setting his Zeal on fire; and yet the Man himself not supposed to be unable to do any thing for himself, but the contrary: so, in the Case before us, a Man may be called *dead in Trespasses and Sins*; and the Wrath of God, or the Joys of Heaven, and all the Offers of the Gospel, may quicken him; and to these may the thing be ascribed; yet, all this while, without supposing him *dead*, in a literal Sense, or incapable of bearing any part in the accepting these Offers; in the regarding these Motives; and in helping forward his own Happiness. This is a figurative Expression, applied to the State of Sinners: who, as they are said to be *quickened* by God and his Gospel; so are they very frequently called upon to consider their Ways; to rouse themselves out of their supine, and slothful state; to *forsake that which is evil, and practise that which is good*. Neither therefore, is the great Part which *Almighty God* bears in our Salvation, an Argument that *He* will do all, without *Us*: nor is our Weakness, and Inability,

290 *Mistakes about Man's Inability, &c.*

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bility, a total Incapacity to join with Him, in our hearty Endeavours and Labours. But, as his Hand is necessary; so is our own. As his Arm is powerful to save; so is our own requisite to our Happiness. As our Weakness is nothing without his Strength; so his Strength will be nothing to us without our Weakness. As he is the great Contriver, and Disposer, of the whole Scheme of our Salvation, and is ready to give the *Sufficiency* of his Spirit to all who sincerely ask it; so we are required, and consequently, are able, both to ask it heartily, and to join our own Endeavours with it: on which, together with God's Assistance, our Holiness now, and Happiness hereafter, most certainly depend.



S E R-



*Mistakes about Man's Inability, and God's
Grace, considered.*

S E R M O N XIV.

II C O R. iii. 5.

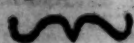
*Not that we are sufficient of our selves, to
think any thing as of our selves : but our
Sufficiency is of God.*



IN my former Discourse upon S E R M.
XIV.
these Words, I shewed you that
it was the sole Design of St.

Paul in them, to declare,
that, in the setting about, and executing,
the difficult and laborious Work of an *A-*
postle, He did not arrogate to himself the
Power, and Ability, and Success, which he
had: but that he ascribed his Sufficiency for
this great Work, as well as his being designed
to it, to God himself, who was the great
Contriver of the whole Scheme of Christia-

SER M.
XIV.



nity; who miraculously called the *Apostles* to the carrying forward his Design in it; and who endowed them with Powers from above for the Execution of it. This being laid down, as the true meaning of the *Apostle's* Words; I did from hence take occasion to examine and confute the Mistakes of such Christians, as have pretended to be led, by this and such like Expressions in the *New Testament*, into such Notions of their own Weakness and Inability to perform the Will of God; and of the part God Almighty is to bear in their Reformation and Amendment; as induce them to indulge their vicious Inclinations, and retain their evil Habits, under the Pretext of waiting for the Interposition of Heaven, and the irresistible Motions of God's Spirit: without which, they think, they can do nothing towards their Salvation; and for the obtaining of which, they imagine that nothing can be done on their Parts.

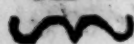
I HOPE, I then made it appear that what was said by St. *Paul* with respect to the Work of an *Apostle* in those Days, in which almost insuperable Difficulties attended it, ought not to be applied to the common Duty of all Christians, in the ordinary Course of

of God's Providence; that St. *Paul* himself S E R M. 2
 never spake of the Obedience of Christians XIV.
 to the Moral Commands of the Gospel, after
 such a manner as to give Encouragement to any such Opinion, as that of some
 who are not content with the Help of God,
 but would willingly have all irresistibly done
 by Him; and that the Assistance afforded by
 God to all the honest Endeavours of sincere
 Christians, in the Gospel-Dispensation, is
 so far from being an Inducement to them
 to leave all to be effected by *that*, that it
 is the most powerful Argument possible to
 them to exert themselves to the utmost for
 their own Good; and made use of to this
 Purpose by the *Apostles* themselves, and particularly by St. *Paul*.

AFTER this, I answered more particularly to *Two Objections*: for the present, supposing that in the *New Testament* there are some Expressions which ascribe the whole Work of Salvation to God, and represent Men as dead and unactive in it. And I shewed, either that those Expressions were designed solely to give to God the Glory of designing and contriving the Dispensation of the Gospel, and the Work of Redemption;

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and to describe the State of the World before the Gospel, buried in Sin, and without any Prospect of Help, or any Possibility of such a Relief, unless it had come first from Him: or, if any high Expressions of this sort be used concerning the ordinary Task of the Body of Christians, that they may be justly interpreted, by all the Rules of speaking, without recurring to so great an Absurdity, so destructive to the Cause of Virtue; and particularly, that they must be explained by the Tenour of plainer Texts, which all represent a great deal to depend upon the Endeavours of *Christians* themselves, as well as upon the Aids of God's Spirit; and are constantly pressing the labouring part upon all who pretend to be in Pursuit of Happiness.

THERE is one more *Objection* which deserves a very serious Consideration in this Debate: and which, therefore, I design particularly to answer before I proceed; and that is this, that it is more for the Glory of God, that the whole Work of our Amendment, and Reformation, and Salvation, should be left to *Him*, than that any part of it should be claimed by our selves; and that
upon

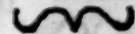
upon this Account it seems more probable S E R M.
that it all depends upon his irresistible Arm; XIV.
and more pious and humble for Men passively
ly to permit it to do so. But all this is
founded upon Two Errors; *first*, the not
judging rightly what is the true Glory of
Almighty God; and *secondly*, the imagining
that to suppose Man capable of acting to-
gether with God in this great Work, is to ex-
clude God from being the Original Foun-
tain of every thing: and therefore, may be
fully answered by some Observations, re-
lating to these Two Points. And,

I. THE Glory of God is to be measured
by his Nature, and Attributes; and by the
Declarations of his Word. If we consider
his *Attributes*; we must fix nothing upon
him but what is perfectly consistent with the
united Harmony of them all. He is per-
fectly wise; perfectly just; and perfectly
holy. Now it is a greater Glory to his Wis-
dom, to make Creatures capable of Freedom
in their Actions, than to make only Clock-
work, and Machines, to be moved by the
immediate and constant Interposition of the
Artificer. It is a greater Glory to his Holi-
ness, (that Attribute by which He is repre-

SERM. sented as a Lover of Virtue, and Hater of
 XIV. Vice,) to assist Men in their Endeavours
 after Perfection; than to force them to be
 perfect, whether they will or no. Nay, the
 contrary seems utterly inconsistent with the
 Supposition of his loving Virtue more than
 Vice. For if Virtue be not something, in
 some degree, depending upon our selves;
 there is no reason why he should love it, as
 it is in us, more than the contrary. For Jus-
 tice requires that every one should be valued,
 and rewarded, according to what is in him-
 self good, or evil. Now, if Virtue be no-
 thing but the irresistible Operation of God
 upon us; there can be no Reason in the
 World assigned why He should hate and pu-
 nish a wicked Man, and love and reward
 another: because, as to themselves, they
 are exactly alike.

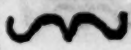
THE only difference here supposed is this,
 that God is pleased, after an arbitrary man-
 ner, to work upon one; and wholly to pass
 by the other. If any Parent should heap his
 Favours upon one Child, and then shew the
 greatest Fondness to him, merely because
 those Favours have been heaped upon him;
 and absolutely refuse to bestow the least de-
 gree

gree of the same upon another of his Children, and yet hate and punish him, because he had not what he could not have without his Will: would not all the World condemn such a Parent of the most partial Fondness, and of the most arbitrary Proceeding; and attribute it to nothing but Weakness of Understanding; or Strength of Passion? And yet this is what we are not afraid to lay upon Almighty God, when we represent Him as doing all for some, with an irresistible Arm; and then loving them for what they have no part in: and, on the other side, as passing by others, and refusing them that same Strength, without which they cannot move; and yet hating and condemning them for not being what they cannot be, and not doing what they cannot do. If we could not think of this in any Earthly Parent, without calling in question his Wisdom; or his true Regard to what is praiseworthy: how can we fix it upon Almighty God? It is indeed to call in question his Wisdom; or his Impartiality; or his Love to what is truly lovely; or his Aversion to that only which is truly the Object of it. But if a Father hath an equal Regard to all his Children;

S E R M.
XIV.


SERM. Children; and is ready to assist them all in
 XIV. their honest Endeavours; to put them in the
 way of pleasing him; to encourage them to
 do it; to deter them from the contrary; and
 to reward, or punish them, according as they
 have voluntarily chosen to make use of, or
 to abuse, his favours: This we account Wisdom,
 and Equity; and a true Notion of
 Virtue; and a true Love to what is Praiseworthy;
 and a true Abhorrence of what deserves Hatred
 and Discouragement.

WE cannot help having such Notions of
 Wisdom, Justice, and Holiness: and if,
 whilst we have such, we can fix any thing
 upon God contrary to these; we certainly
 rob Him of the Glory of what we constantly
 account Perfections; and of what we ever
 esteem to belong to Wisdom, Equity, and
 Holiness. Let any one therefore think,
 whether it can be a Glory to God, to represent
 Him as acting a Part amongst his Children,
 and Creatures, which we should severely
 blame in any Earthly Parent? *If I be
 a Father*, saith Almighty God, upon a different
 Occasion, *where is mine Honour?* It
 may be said, if God be a Father, and so
 thought by us; where is the Regard to Him,
 under

under this Notion, when that Conduct is S E R M.
attributed to Him, which would not be seen XIV.
in an earthly Father, without great Detesta- 

tion, and Abhorrence? If we think, therefore,
of God, as of a Being vested with all Perfec-
tion of Wisdom, Equity, and Holiness; we
shall find it a greater Glory to such a Being,
to suppose Him assisting his Creatures in the
Way to Happiness; joining his Strength to
their Endeavours; and expecting their sin-
cere Endeavours to be joined to his Strength;
than to represent Him as doing all irresistibly
for them; and then loving them and re-
warding them, for what was forced upon
them whether they would or no: and, on
the other hand, as neglecting many others,
who could not stir one Step without the same
irresistible Arm to work for them; and, af-
ter this, hating and condemning them for
lying in a State, in which they could not but
lie, unless He himself forced them out of it.
The one is the Glory of an equitable Distri-
butor of Favours, and Frowns; of Rewards,
and Punishments: the other is the Glory of a
Tyrannick and Arbitrary Mind, which raiseth
to it self Favourites out of Humour; and
loves and hates entirely at the Influence of
Prejudice,

S E R M. Prejudice, and without Regard to any thing,
 XIV. but what is in itself base and unreasonable.

AND, as we should not fail to judge thus in the Case of any Earthly Parent; so we cannot help it in the much higher Case now before us: nay, we must lose all Notions of good, and equal, and wise; and leave off to speak of God at all, if we can think otherwise. If, therefore, we have any Regard to the Glory of God; *the Glory due unto his Name*; the Glory of his real and unalterable Perfections: let us not, under Pretense of making Him great and powerfull, devest Him of Wisdom, and Equity; let us not, under Pretense of making Him the sole Actor in the great Affair of Salvation, rob Him of the Glory which is much greater; the Glory of regarding, and loving, and rewarding, his reasonable Creatures, (not according to mere Will and Power; but) according to what degrees of good, and sincere, are in them; and according to what depends, in some measure, upon themselves. What we call Virtue, if it be necessarily produced by an Agent distinct from our selves, is not Virtue, nor commendable, nor rewardable, in us; nor any more to us, than that
 Vice

Vice which is supposed as necessary in another. And if so, we cannot be loved, or rewarded, by a wise and holy God, for what doth no more deserve Love in us, than the contrary. But Almighty God is wise, and holy, and equal; and certainly loves, and regards Virtue, as a thing Praise-worthy in us. From whence it follows that it is not so wholly his Work in us, but that He expects Labour from our selves; and looks upon it as depending in some degree, upon our selves: tho' always under the Influences of his good Spirit; which is ever ready to attend upon our sincere Endeavours.

S E R M.
XIV.

AND thus indeed, is He represented in *holy Scripture*; as delighting in the Man that doth his Will, and walks in the Paths of Virtue; and as abhorring the Man who acts a contrary Part: neither of which could he do, were it equally impossible to both sorts to be virtuous; and were He himself the sole Mover, and irresistible Worker, of all that is good. But,

2. THE other Consideration I mentioned was this, That the *Objection* I am now answering, is founded upon the Imagination that the giving to Man any part in his own Amend-

S E R M. Amendment, and Salvation, implies in it
 XIV. that it is not owing to Almighty God:
 which seems to derogate from his Glory. Whereas, as I have before observed to you, Almighty God is not at all excluded by this Supposition. For Man, having no Powers, and being possessed of no Faculties, but what are originally owing to this great Creator; he can arrive at no Happiness, but what He must acknowledge to be owing to that first Original of all his Powers, and all his Faculties.

To say, therefore, that Men can bear an active, and a voluntary Part, in their own Reformation, and Happiness, is not to derogate from God; because it is no more than to say that God hath so made them, and endow'd them with such Powers, as that they are able to do something for themselves. It is not to detract from their Obligations to their great Creator, and Redeemer; but it is only to shew what He hath made them capable of doing: and still the making of them so, is entirely his Work; and all the happy Result of it, his Glory. Their Use of these Faculties is indeed made, in some measure, their own Work, and voluntary Part; that
 so

so it may make them the *Subjects* of Reward: SERM.
XIV.
 but the Grant of these Faculties is the creating Work of God; ascribed to him; and a perpetual Fountain of such a Glory as He delights in, when they are used well, and as herequires them to be used; and this a more *rational Glory*, and a more worthy Honour, than if He had made them only as *Machines*, to be Instances of his Power, and Arguments merely of his Greatness. And besides, I am far from contending that, in the present Degeneracy of Humane Nature, these Faculties can do all. For I maintain the Necessity of God's gracious Concurrence. I am only arguing that they can act together with God's holy Spirit; and that our Holiness depends upon our own Labour, together with the Assistance of That.

THUS much may suffice to shew the Weakness of this *Objection*, which pretends to sacrifice Virtue it self to the Glory of God; and to prove the Truth of this Proposition, that it is the truest Glory to such a Being as we are taught, by Reason and Revelation, to esteem Almighty God to be, to have made Man capable, in some degree, of a voluntary Motion towards Heaven and
 Happy

S E R M. Happiness ; and to love and reward him for
 XIV. something which depends upon himself, as
 well as upon the friendly Assistance of God :
 which is still made equally necessary to his
 Attainment of *Christian* Perfection.

B U T because the Perverseness of habitual Sinners is such, that they are not only glad to lay hold on such Pretences, as I have already examined, to fortify themselves in Sin, which they love, and embrace, as the Effect of their unavoidable Weakness ; but to argue from some other *Passages* of the *Scripture*, relating even to good Men ; from which they hope for Comfort, and endeavour to flatter themselves that their present deplorable Condition is no worse a State of Weakness than what some in a very safe Condition have been in : I shall, therefore, before I conclude, take notice of *Two*, or *Three*, of these abused and perverted *Passages*.

I. T H E *first* I shall mention, is That in *Prov. xxiv.* at the 16th ver. *For a just Man falleth seven times.* It is almost a Shame indeed to mention it : but that some have been so extremely weak as to lay hold on it, to administer Comfort to themselves in their falling into Sin. Nay, they generally cite it

it thus, *The just Man falleth seven times* SERM.
a Day : whereas there is no such Word as XIV.
the last, either in the *Original*, or in any
Translation. I need only direct any one of
the most ordinary Capacity to the Passage,
as it lies in that *Chapter* : For whoever turns
to it will presently find that the *falling*, there
spoken of, is *falling* into Trouble, and Af-
fliction, and Misfortune ; and not into Sin.
For the whole Verse is thus. *For a just*
Man falleth seven times, and riseth up a-
gain : but the Wicked shall fall into Mis-
chief. The Verse before is Advice to the
Wicked. *Lay not wait, O wicked Man,*
against the Dwelling of the Righteous ; spoil
not his Resting-place. *For a just Man fal-*
leth seven times, &c. It is designed plainly
to represent to us that God preserveth the
good Man from the Attempts of the Wick-
ed ; and that the Wicked often fall into that
Mischief, which they design against the Righ-
teous. The *Verses* following do likewise
go on to speak wholly of Temporal Evils ;
and of falling into Affliction. The whole
Ground, therefore, of this Pretense is taken
away. For here is nothing said of the wil-
ful Sins of good Men ; but of their being
X frequently

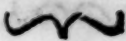
SERM. frequently afflicted; and frequently supported in, and raised out of, their Troubles.

XIV.



BUT, supposing it were said that even good Men are frequently, or sometimes, surprized into Failings: this can be nothing to those wretched Persons who indulge themselves in an Habit of sinning. For whatever Failings a truly sincere Christian may have been surprized into; they always render him much more careful, and more arm'd against them, for the Time to come: whereas the Sinner is confirmed and settled more and more, in his wicked Course, by every Step he takes in the Paths of Sin. Nay, He aggravates the Guilt of his sinful Course, by making those Failings of good Men, which are their Grief, and the Arguments of the greatest Care and Caution to themselves, to be the Ground of Encouragement to him, in a careless, and supine Neglect of God's Laws. But,

2. ANOTHER as weak Pretense is founded upon that passage in the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, ch. xiv. at the 15th v. where *Paul* and *Barnabas* say to the *Lycaonians*, *We also are Men of like Passions with yourselves*: from whence some have concluded them-

themselves to be in as safe a Condition as SERM.
 some of the best of Men ; even whilst their XIV.
 Passions and Lusts were in full Power. 

Whereas, this Passage hath no relation to the
 Distinction between *good* and *bad* ; *passio-*
nate, and *well-temper'd* Men : but between
Men, and *God* ; between *Humane Nature*,
 and the *Divine*. It was spoken to deter the
Lycaonians from offering Sacrifice to *Paul*,
 and *Barnabas*, as if they were *Gods*. The
 Words in the *Greek* signify, We are Beings
 liable to the same Imperfections ; the same
 Sufferings ; and particularly to Death it self ;
 as you are. We are weak, and mortal ;
 even Men, as well as your selves : and there-
 fore, do not pay what you account Divine
 Honour, to us. Then follows immediately,
who preach unto you that you should turn
from these Vanities unto the living God.
 This again shews that the *Apostles* did not
 level themselves with these Sinners : for it
 would have been to no purpose to have en-
 deavoured to convert them, if, at the same
 time, they acknowledged themselves to be
 in the same Condition of *vicious Passion*,
 and *indulged Sin*.

SERM.
XIV.

So that, whether we consider the Words themselves; they were designed to signify nothing but that the *Apostles* were mortal Men, and not Gods: or the Circumstances of the Place; they shew us that the *Apostles* were at the very time preaching to the *Lycanians* the absolute Necessity of forsaking their Sins. How unjust, therefore, is it for a Sinner to lay hold on so foolish a Mistake; and to chuse to fix the greatest Blot and Absurdity upon the *Apostles* themselves, rather than become truly good and virtuous.

3. ONE *Passage* more I shall just mention; and that is, St. *Paul's* calling himself, the *chief* of *Sinners*. 1 Tim. i. 15. *Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners; of whom I am chief.* Now, whoever turns to the 13th *Verse*, will find that he speaks there of himself, not in his present Condition; but, before his receiving of the Gospel. For there he describes himself, (the *Sinner* on whom Christ had Mercy,) as one who was *before* a *Blasphemer*, and a *Persecutor*, and *injurious*: not that he was such an one at the time he spake this; but before he was a *Christian*. So that this can administer no Comfort, but

to one who hath left that sad Condition; and is become what *St. Paul* at that time was: who was to be an Instance of God's Readiness to forgive the greatest Enemy, upon hearty Amendment; but not whilst he remains in that State of Enmity.

BESIDES, *St. Paul* speaks not this with relation to a sinful and vicious acting against the Dictates of his Conscience: but solely with regard to his having been a Persecutor, and Blasphemer, of the Christian Religion. As for other Parts of his Conduct; he often declareth that he was an exact Observer of that Law of which he was then a professed Disciple: and therefore this is not to be interpreted of that which we commonly call *Vice*, and *Immorality*, in profess'd *Christians*. But the Influence *St. Paul's* Example should have upon *Christians*, should all be taken from what he was after he was a *Christian*. And thence let all Sinners learn their Shame. For they will find him describing himself, as an Example to all to whom he addressed himself; and they will see Him to have been as great an Instance of Labour, Humility, Meekness, Charity, Piety, and every Virtue, as ever blessed the *Church of Christ*.

SERM. His State, as he was a *Christian*, is what
 XIV. Christians should regard : and in this, they
 will find him so perfect, that they will have
 but little Encouragement from hence to
 flatter themselves in those Vices which he
 abhorred; or in that foolish Notion of their
 Weakness, of which his Example, as well
 as Precepts, is the greatest Confutation pos-
 sible. If Men be Heathens, and Infidels in-
 deed, they may learn from St. *Paul's* Ex-
 ample, that God will make Allowances for
 their Prejudices; and accept them, when-
 ever they sincerely comply with the Offers
 of his Gospel : but if they be *Christians*, they
 can learn nothing from his Example, but a
 continual Watching, and Care, *lest they be-*
come Castaways; and an Assurance, that
 they have Strength enough to be *Fellow-*
workers together with God, in order to all
 things required for their Happiness, and Sal-
 vation.

BUT how unwilling do we find Men to
 think themselves able to bear any Part in
 what is good? In the Paths of Vice; in
 the Projects of Iniquity; in the Execution
 of what is evil; their Feet are swift, and
 their Hands strong; and their Heads able:
 but

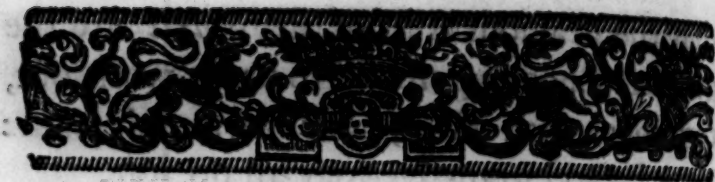
but when God's Will is to be performed ; S E R M.
nothing is so weak. so impotent, so unable XIV.
as they. Thus, if you ask a worldly-mind-
ed Man for a Gift of Charity, or true Gene-
rosity ; he often pretends Inability, and In-
capacity ; whilst he hath enough to lay out
upon any Trifle, or useless piece of Vanity ;
or a great deal laid up, a Sacrifice to Co-
vetousness, and Usefulness. The voluptu-
ous Man hath Power and Spirit to encoun-
ter Difficulties without Number ; to watch
incessantly ; to labour without Intermision ;
to deny himself in many Instances, in order
to come to some imaginary Pleasure : but if
you speak of Self-denial for the sake of Re-
ligion, or Virtue ; presently the Weakness
of Human Nature is pleaded, and the Im-
possibility of undergoing the least part of the
same Labour, for the sake of the greatest
Good possible. If ever they think of Amend-
ment they desire to wait God's Time ; till his
irresistible Arm moves them, against their
Will. As for themselves ; they are dead, and
without Life : unless it be to offend God, and
provoke his Anger. Foolish and unwise !
to think that such Excuses can ever pass up-
on the Searcher of all Hearts ! to think that

SERM. their own wilful Habits will be an Apology
 XIV. for their continuing in them ! No, The
 more difficult we find it, the more immediately must we set about the Work : considering that the Difficulty hath been created by our own Folly, and Wilfulness.

LET us not, therefore, pretend Weakness and Inability, in a Case which should fire and animate us to do Wonders. Let us pray to God, in Sincerity, for his holy Spirit ; and heartily labour, our selves, under its Directions, and Influences. Let us not think that a *vicious Inclination* is a better *Excuse* on *one* side, than the Dictate of a good Conscience is an *Argument* on the *other*. Let us not be so ungrateful to that God who is our Maker, as to think he frames and fits us for nothing but Sin ; and leaves all that is good entirely out of our Composition. Let us not be so base, and ungrateful to our Redeemer, as to take occasion, from the Assistances offered us in the Gospel, to *continue in Sin* ; and so blasphemous, as to neglect to do our Duty, under Pretense of consulting the Glory of God. But let us remember that our acting our Parts well, is his greatest Glory ; and
 that

that the gracious Aids of his *Spirit* are the S E R M.
greatest Encouragement to us to work out, XIV.
together with Him, our own Salvation: ~~~~~
Which God grant we may all do, &c.





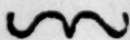
*The true, and false, Notions of Repentance,
considered.*

SERMON XV.

ACTS iii. part of the 19th Verse.

*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that
your Sins may be blotted out.*

SERM.
XV.



THE great Concern of all Christians is, so to pass through Things Temporal, that they finally lose not the Things Eternal: And the most important Enquiry in order to this, is that which leads us to the certain Knowledge of those *Terms* upon which God will pardon, and accept us. But though this be a Point of infinitely the greatest Importance of any that can come within the Thoughts of a Christian: yet there is no Point, in which Christians act a more careless, and surprizing,
Part

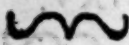
Part than in this ; and none in which they S E R M.
more willingly contribute to their own De- XV.
ceit, and Ruin. Nor in any thing is this
more visible, than in those false Notions
which many give themselves leave to enter-
tain concerning the Nature of that *Repentance*,
to which they find the Promise of
Forgiveness to be annexed in the Gospel.
As it is our Duty, therefore, to put a Stop,
as much as we are able, to such mistaken
Apprehensions, as may endanger the Eter-
nal Happiness of Men ; so, I shall now en-
deavour it, in this Particular, in pursuance
of what I have, in some former Discourses,
attempted, in order to establish in our Minds
the true Notion of those *Terms* which are
required of us, in order to our final Accep-
tance with God. And,

I. I SHALL endeavour to shew you the
true Nature of that Repentance, which is
of force for the Remission of Sins. And,

II. FROM hence I shall make appear the
great Weakness of those mistaken Notions
of it, by which many Christians have been
deceived.

I. IN order to shew the true Nature of
that Repentance which is spoken of in the
New

SERM. *New Testament*, I shall premise *Two* or
 XV. *Three* Observations, *Viz.*



I. THAT our *blessed Lord*, and his *Apostles*, preaching to a World of Men, grown up in Heathen Impieties, and arrived at full Age, without such bright Light and Conviction, as the *Gospel* brought along with it, constantly speak of *Repentance*, in their Discourses to them, as the first Step towards their Acceptance with God. This We may see in the *Gospels*, and all thro' the *Acts* of the *Apostles*; that, when Heathens, or wicked Jews, are spoken to, and instructed what to do, in order to Salvation, the first Word generally is; *Repent*: as here, in the *Text*, *St. Peter* calls upon the *Jews* who had hitherto *rejected the Lord of Life*, to *repent*; and that in order to their being *converted*; as it follows. For the first Step that a vicious Man can take towards a Change of his Life, is to be truly sensible of the Unreasonableness of that Course of Sin and Iniquity, in which he hath formerly lived; and to have due Sentiments of his past Behaviour: because, without this due inward Sense of it, He can never heartily consent to forsake, and amend it; or, in the Expression

pression used in the *Text*, to be converted, S E R M. XV.
 or turned, from it. Thus in the *Second Chapter* of the *Acts*, the same *St. Peter* exhorts the unbelieving *Jews*, *Repent and be baptized*. *Repentance* is the first Step: because, as I have already observed, without a Sense of the Unreasonableness and Wickedness of their former State, they could not possibly, with Sincerity, think it worth their while to believe in *Jesus Christ*; and to be baptiz'd, and entered, into his Religion, so different from their former Condition.

AND, this being the first Step that could be taken by an unbelieving, or wicked Man; no wonder that this is pointed out as the first, in order to Salvation, or Remission of Sins. Upon this first *Repentance* of Unbelievers, they were baptized, and by Baptism put into a State of Salvation; and a Capacity of being happy upon the Conditions of *Jesus Christ*: and therefore this may well be spoken of, as the Road to Salvation, and Happiness; because without it there could be no entering into the *Christian Dispensation*. This then, is that Condition of Acceptance, which is chiefly spoken of thro' the *Gospels*, and the *Acts* of the *Apostles*;

SER M. *Apostles*; which give us an account of what
 XV. was said to *Unbelievers*, and wicked *Jews*,
 or *Gentiles*. But,

2. THE next Observation I have to make is, that, as soon as this first *Condition* was complied with, and Men were persuaded by the *Apostle's* Preaching into a due Sense of their past evil Courses, and into a thorough Renunciation of them; that, as soon as they were, in consequence of this, entered into the *Christian Religion* by *Baptism*, and were professed Members of Christ's Body, the Church: that then, I say, all the Exhortations of the *Apostles*, and all their Persuasions, ran perpetually upon *Newness of Life*; upon *working out their own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; upon the Danger of falling back into their former State; and upon the Perfection of Virtue required of them. This is plain from the *Epistles*, written by the *Apostles* to professed Christians: which are full of the most pathetic Exhortations to all Virtue; and of the most severe Reprehensions of all Vice; and of the plainest Condemnations of Christians, who are wilful Sinners, to the greatest Degrees of God's Displeasure.

So that from your Observation of what S E R M. you read in the *Acts* of the *Apostles*; and XV. of what you find in their *Epistles*; you cannot but make these Two Conclusions: That *Repentance* is the Subject of their Sermons, when they are preaching to unbelieving, or wicked, *Jews* and *Gentiles*; in order to persuade them to leave off their former Behaviour, and come over to the Christian Religion: and that, after they are Christians, they are with the same Earnestness pressing upon them the absolute, indispensable, Necessity of all Holiness and Virtue; as they were before inculcating the Necessity of their renouncing their former State of Infidelity, and Vice. The frequent mention of *Repentance* is made to those who were not already Christians: but to Christians, the Practice of all Virtue, and the positive Improvement in all that is good and Praiseworthy, is vehemently recommended. But,

3. T H O' this be so in fact; as will appear to any one who will compare the Preaching of the *Apostles* to *Unbelievers*, with the *Moral Rules* and Instructions given to *Believers*; yet I must observe that there was place found for *Repentance*, in favour of

SERM. of such professed Christians as wilfully fin-
 XV. ned, upon their giving evident Tokens of
 the Sincerity of it. But then, there was no
 other Token of it supposed to be sincere,
 but actual Amendment, and Reformation;
 without which it is evident, from the Te-
 nor of all the *Apostles* Declarations, in their
Epistles, that there was no Hope of Ac-
 quittance at the last Day of Accounts. Thus
 the sinful *Corinthian* was restored to Peace;
 not till He was in danger of being *swal-
 lowed up with over-much sorrow*, 2 Cor. ii.
 7; and after much more Difficulty, and
 Severity of Discipline; than was used in ad-
 mitting the *Repentance* of one who had not
 before professed himself a Christian. If any
 one who was *called a Brother*, i. e. a Chri-
 stian, was an habitual Sinner; His Com-
 pany was to be avoided by other *Christians*,
 as one whom they were not to own for a
 Christian, in those Days when it could be
 done, 1 Cor. v. 11. But this was upon
 Supposition of the Person's not amending
 his Life: for it is evident that, upon the
 Tokens of a sincere Amendment, He was
 admitted again to Hopes of Happiness. *Let
 him that stole steal no more*, was the Me-
 thod

thod which St. Paul prescribed in the Case S E R M.
of the Sin of Theft; *Ephes.* iv. 28. which XV.
implies in it that Amendment is the Sum of
the *Repentance* of a Christian; and that,
upon that Amendment, He is in a safe Con-
dition.

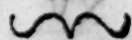
I COULD give more Evidence of this
from the first Records of Christianity: but
this one Argument, is sufficient; which I
have heretofore enlarged upon; viz. that
the Gospel would in-vain profess to bring
Salvation to mortal Men, if every wilful
Deviation from the Rules of Virtue were
so unpardonable, that no future Amend-
ment were sufficient to entitle the Sinner
to the Forgiveness of what was past. For,
as to forgive Sinners without actual Amend-
ment and Reformation, would be to en-
courage them to continue in Sin: so, ab-
solutely to deny Forgiveness to every wilful
Sin, tho' sincerely repented of, and for-
saken, would be to drive Men by Despair
into the same State of Sin; and to defeat
the Designs of the Gospel. And therefore,
we may be sure that, as nothing but Amend-
ment, and future Holiness, can entitle a
Y Christian

SERM. Christian to Forgiveness of his past Sins;
 XV. so these most certainly will do it.



THUS then the Case stands. The unbelieving World of *Jews*, and *Gentiles*, were supposed by the *Apostles* to be great and wilful Sinners: and therefore, *Repentance* was the first thing spoken of, to them. Believers, or Christians, entered into, and solemnly engaged in, the *holiest* of all Institutions, were not supposed by them to be *Wilful Sinners*; or to continue in those Sins which they had renounced at *Baptism*: as the *Apostle* himself argues, *Rom. vi.* And therefore little mention is made to them expressly of *Repentance*; but much of living worthy of their Profession, and of fulfilling all the Laws of Morality, and Virtue, in the highest degree possible. But if any of them were overcome by Sin, and tempted to transgress the Rules of their Institution; Amendment was required and accepted, for the sake of that *Advocate with the Father*, *Jesus Christ the righteous*.

WHAT, therefore, remains for us, who are professed Christians, to do, in this Matter? Certainly, We are not to look merely



to that which was recommended to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, as the first Step only towards Happiness: but to those Injunctions laid upon such as became professed Christians; and to the Methods prescribed to Them. And then, we can never mistake in this great and important Affair: because we can never think our selves at liberty to dispense with that Holiness, and Perfection of Virtue, which is constantly press'd upon Christians. If therefore, we take in the whole of this Matter; and consider *Repentance*, with relation to professed Christians, who have been Sinners; as something which will entitle them to God's Favour; it must certainly equally suppose and imply in it these following Parts.

1. A N hearty Sorrow, and deep Concern, for all past Transgressions of the Laws of God.

2. A N unfeigned Disposition of Mind, opposite to that of Sin and Wickedness, and tending to fulfil his Will. And,

3. A N actual avoiding, or resisting, those Temptations, by which they have been formerly over-powered; and an actual Practice of the contrary Virtues.

SERM.

XV.

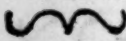
I. WITH respect to the *first* of these ; all are willing enough to admit that *Repentance* must suppose and imply it ; because a little Sorrow, and a short-liv'd Passion, will cost them little Pains, and Trouble. The lowest Notion of *Repentance* takes in that of being sorrowful ; and having a tender Disposition of Mind, for the present, whilst that Sorrow lasts. About this, therefore, there needs no Debate ; because this is the part of *Repentance* which the weak side of Humane Nature is the most pleased with. But,

2. THERE must be a Change of Disposition within. The Word used in the *New Testament* signifieth an Alteration of the Purpose, and Frame, within.

ST. *Paul* reckons not Sorrow a part of Repentance ; but Repentance an Effect of Sorrow : 2 *Cor.* vii. 10. *For godly Sorrow, (and that is the Sorrow, we are now speaking of) worketh Repentance to Salvation, not to be repented of.* It worketh such a Disposition of Mind, as manifestly shews what it is that produceth it. If any Person be concerned, and sorrowful at any thing that hath pass'd him ; it never fails to
work

work in Him a Disposition leading to the contrary for the Time to come. And, if you consult the Movements of your own Minds, you must find that a true Concern within, at any past part of your Conduct, is never without a firm Thought, and Disposition, contrary to that which hath caused that Regret, and Concern, in you. If this be so, in all other Cases ; we may depend upon it, it is the same in this now before us. If we be truly sorrowful, and heartily concerned, that we have offended God, and sinned against his Laws ; this will certainly be accompanied with as sincere, and as hearty, a Disposition to please Him, and obey his whole Will for the Time to come. And it cannot be supposed to be a sincere Sorrow without this. Nor is this all :
for,

3. THIS Sorrow, and this Change of Mind, if they be sincere, must unavoidably produce a Course of Behaviour contrary to that which caused this Sorrow, and this Disposition : and if this be not the Effect of them, they are of no Account ; unless it be to increase the Condemnation of those who pretend to them. Thus St. *Paul*, in

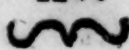
SERM. the forecited *Seventh Chapter* of his *Second Epistle* to the *Corinthians*, *Verse 10*,
 XV.  declareth that *godly Sorrow worketh Repentance to Salvation, a Repentance not to be repented of*: perhaps the Words more properly signify, such a Repentance, as implies in it no occasion for *Repentance* afterwards; such a *Repentance* as implies in it a Conduct and Behaviour, of which there is no reason to repent. And He goes on, in the next Verse, to prove their Sorrow for having offended to be sincere, and genuine; not from their Words, but from their Actions and Behaviour: by which only it was that He judged that they *sorrowed after a godly sort*.

BUT what need I appeal to Him? We our selves are Judges of this Matter, if we be not foolishly partial to our selves, by our intimate Acquaintance with the Springs, and Frame, of Human Nature. There are none of us all, who, in the Case of other Persons, do not constantly judge of the Bent of their inward Thoughts, and the Sincerity of their outward Professions, by their Actions and Behaviour; and by these only. In any Matters that concern
 our

our selves, we never take the Professions S E R M.
of others concerning their inward Dispo- XV.
sitions towards us, to be the true Repre-
sentations of them, unless we see the Fruits,
and Effects, which, in such Cases, we can-
not help judging, would follow upon such
Dispositions of Mind. How then can we
possibly think our selves sincere in our *Sor-*
row, and inward *Repentance* towards God;
whilst we see them void of those good
Effects, by which only they are as cer-
tainly known amongst Men themselves, as
a good Tree is known by the Fruit it pro-
duceth?

AND if we proceed in our Enquiries,
and examine farther into the Constitution
of our own Natures; we shall find that all
the Powers and Faculties of our Minds were
given us for no other Purpose, but to re-
gulate our Behaviour, and Conduct; and
that they are all of no account, but as tend-
ing, and employed, that way. We never
think any Persons arrived at the use of their
inward Faculties, till they are fit to act, and
shew themselves in the World: and we ne-
ver judge any to be prudent, or impru-
dent; mad, or sober within; but by their
outward

SERM. outward Conduct and Demeanor. What
XV. signify all our inward Powers? Of what
Importance is it, to judge and determine,
within our own Minds; to reflect and cen-
sure our own Actions; unless it be in or-
der to have an Influence upon them? As
sure, therefore, as it is, that any Person
hath a Power within, to judge which way
of Action is best: so sure is it, that this
Power could be given for nothing, but to
determine his Actions the best Way. As
sure as it is that we have, all of us, a Con-
science, or Reason, to direct us before we
act; and to applaud, or condemn us after-
wards: so sure is it, that this hath solely
a respect to our Actions, and Behaviour.
If, therefore, we cannot but reflect with
Sorrow, and Concern, upon some part of
our Behaviour; which we find contradicto-
ry to the Laws of Reason, and of God: it
is certain that this very Power of Reflexi-
on was designed to influence our Behavi-
our for the Time to come. For, to be
sorry for any part of our Behaviour, im-
plies in it that it was unbecoming, or sin-
ful; and to account it unbecoming, or
sinful, implies in it that it ought never to
be

be practised again: and so it cannot be, but S E R M.
XV.
that this inward Affection must be designed
for the Alteration of what is amiss in us. 

AND if to this we add a Consideration,
or *Two* upon the Nature of *Almighty God*;
we shall find it yet more certain, For, his
Nature being all Perfection; there cannot
be an higher Indignity offered to Him, than
to suppose that our Sorrow, or Grief, which
is, in the degree of it, Misery it self, is
for its own sake acceptable to Him. No,
If we think rightly of Him; we cannot
but think that bare Sorrow is what He
rather dislikes, than likes: but that it is
that *godly Sorrow* only, which worketh
Amendment, and Alteration, that is ap-
proved of by Him. Can our Grief, or
Sorrow, advantage Him? Or, can any
thing of ours affect Him? No. But it is
only, as our Grief may advantage our selves;
and as our Sorrow may lead us to avoid
all Occasions of such Sorrow for the Time
to come; that it can be well-pleasing in his
Eyes.

WILL you then judge from the Na-
ture of Man? You see, All the inward
Movements of his Mind are calculated for
nothing

SERM. nothing but to influence and govern his
 XV. Behaviour: and so, a *Sorrow* without an
 Effect of it upon his Life, must be as insignificant, in his own Account, as the Faculty of Reasoning it self, separated from all Effect upon his Conduct, and Behaviour. Or, will you judge of this Matter from the Nature of God Almighty? He cannot take any Pleasure in our Sorrow; but as it tends to our real Joy and Happiness. It can be of no account in his Eyes; but as it makes us better, and wiser, for the future.

OR lastly, will you judge of it from the great Design of Christianity? How unworthy must you think it of God, to send his Son into the World, to live, and dye, in order to lead Men to a bare, pretended, Sorrow and Grief for their Sins? Is it not the doing his Father's Will, which He presseth upon his Disciples? Is it not declared, that the *Grace of God appeared to Men in the Gospel, to teach them to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts; and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this World?* And is it not to contradict all this, in the most flagrant manner, to
 imagine

imagine that the End of Christ's coming SERM.
could be, to lead Men only to a little vain XV.
empty Sorrow? That is, to lead Men to
what doth, in its own nature, aggravate
their Guilt, if they stop at it, without pro-
ceeding any farther. Aggravate their Guilt,
I say: for when we are sorrowful, on ac-
count of our Sins; this Sorrow supposeth
in it that we ought not to commit them;
and that there is a foul Evil, and Guilt in
them: and this tacit Acknowledgment that
their Nature is foul, and evil, and makes
us guilty before God, cannot but help to
condemn us for returning to what we our-
selves think so Blame-worthy. So that
when we have Opportunity to do better,
and do not; but return again to the same
Sins that we think deserve, and call for,
our Sorrow; we are self-condemned.
The Sorrow, by which we hope to cover
them, must help to make them the more
meritorious of Punishment; as it implies
in it Self-condemnation, and an Acknow-
ledgment of Guilt. But when it leads to
Amendment, and a gradual Increase in Vir-
tue; then only is it the Parent of good
Fruit, lovely in the Eyes of God, and plea-
sing

SERM. sing in the Reflexion of the Man himself.

XV.  How plain, therefore, is it, if we will but consider Things, as they truly are, in their Nature, and Consequences, that the Repentance of Christians, who have been Sinners, necessarily implies in it, an actual forsaking of their Sins, and an actual Progress in all Virtue, and Godliness of living.

II. HAVING thus given as true, and as plain, an Account, as I could, of the *Repentance* which alone can avail any professed Christians; I shall now only make *Two* or *Three* short *Inferences* from what I have laid down, with respect to those *mistaken Notions*, by which many Christians deceive themselves in this Affair. And,

I. FROM what hath been said we see the Vanity, and Misery, of those who place their Hopes of Acceptance with God, upon the Sorrow, and Grief, which they sometimes conceive for their Sins; and call by the Name of *Repentance*, because, in our Language, when we are sorry for any past part of our Conduct, we are said to repent of it. If a Man, proposing to
Himself

Himself to travel to a Place at some distance from his present Station, should conclude himself to be arrived at it, when He had set but one Step out of his own Home ; and there make a full Stop, contented, and satisfied that this would be sufficient : would you not think such a Person distempered in his Brain ? Why, just thus it is in the Case we are considering. We pretend to be travelling towards Happiness : and Repentance , in all its parts, is the Road to this Happiness. The *first* Step, in this Road, is *Sorrow* for our Sins. He that stops at this Sorrow, therefore, and rests himself contented with it, stops at the first Step in his Journey : and how likely He is to arrive at his Journey's End, you may easily judge.

2. THUS again, if the second Step be a good Disposition of Mind to go forwards ; He that stops, without putting in Execution this Disposition, is still as unlikely to arrive at the End proposed. This is another *Mistake* of Men in this Affair, that a present good *Disposition*, and *Resolution* of Mind, is sufficient for their Purpose. But certainly, it is not going one Step, or

two

SERM. two Steps, that will bring us to the End
 XV. of our Spiritual Journey ; but the proceeding as far as Time, and Strength, give leave.

3. FROM what hath been said, we are led not to place any Hopes in what we call a *Death-Bed Repentance*: For this *Repentance*, extorted from us by the Prospect of Death, can be only a Sorrow for Sin ; perhaps rendred more passionate by our present Fears. And this being only Sorrow, and Compunction, and perhaps a good Resolution ; it is plain that still these are only the first Steps in the *Repentance* of a Sinner ; and not complete *Repentance*, in all its parts. I confess these are not ill Signs : but it ought plainly to be declared that Sorrow , and good Words, are not the End of the *Gospel Institution* ; but an holy Life and Conversation. Indeed, where a Person hath had no Calls to Repentance and Amendment before ; but been inevitably blinded by unhappy Circumstances of Education , and hardly known what the *Gospel* pretends to: if such a Person be awakened by his Danger into serious Enquiries, and an hearty Conviction

viction of the Truth of the Gospel; and SERM.
a great Detestation of his former Courses; XV.

one might reasonably hope good Things. But, in the Case of most professed Christians, who are called, day after day, to Amendment; and have all the Arguments imaginable represented to them; and yet, day after day, shut their Ears; spend all that Time and Health, which God allows them, in Vice and Iniquity; and then at last are sorry for this, when God thinks fit to try them no longer: In such Case, I say, all that can be said is, that they are sorrowful for their Sins; and that if that Sorrow be sincere, they are got one Step towards Happiness. But to give greater Hopes; or to say that they are the Christians whom God hath declared, He will accept, in his Gospel, is to render vain all the Threatnings of his Son; to place the Sinner and the Saint upon equal Terms; to put all upon a Man's having a little longer Sicknes than his Neighbour; and to undo the great Design of reforming Men's Lives, the only End worthy of the Son of God's Incarnation.

SERM. THE Result of the whole, is this. Since
 XV. *Almighty God* hath plainly declared, in
 his Gospel, what it is He expects of those
 who have been Sinners; I need not tell
 you, how great a Weakness, and how ex-
 treme a Folly, it is, to have recourse to
 vain, and flattering Hopes of our own.
 Since we are Christians, and have a Gos-
 pel open to us, to have recourse to, upon
 this Oecasion; it is the greatest Weakness
 imaginable to consult our own Passions
 and our own Lusts, what it is fit for us to
 hope for, at the Hands of God. And yet,
 I am persuaded, this is the Case. Were
 not Men inwardly captivated to some Vice;
 Covetousness, or Ambition, or Sensuality;
 there would not be any thing, in the na-
 ture of Things, more evident to themselves,
 than that *Almighty God* cannot be suppo-
 sed to accept any Thing at our Hands,
 without a sincere Amendment of what we
 know, and acknowledge, to be amiss in
 our selves. And yet, such is the Effect of
 our own evil Habits, and the Prevalence
 of our beloved Vices; that we first de-
 sire, and at last come really to hope, to
 be accepted for some superficial Circum-
 stance,

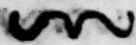
stance, without a real Reformation of our SERM.
Lives. XV.

BUT how long will Men thus deceive themselves, in a Case in which all Deceit is the Ruine of Soul and Body for ever; and in which they can impose upon none but themselves? *Behold, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* This was plain under the Law. How much more plain under the Gospel? As we are *Christians*, we are not so much as supposed to be Sinners. But, if we have transgressed against the plainest Light; God is so merciful as to allow a Place for Reconciliation to his Favour, upon our Amendment. Is this so hard a Condition? Is this so great an Injury to us, that we should turn against it, and abuse the Gospel to our own Destruction? *Shall the Goodness, and Long-suffering of God, instead of leading us to true Repentance, only lead us to a false Image of it; and to treasure up Wrath to our selves against the Day of Wrath?* *Shall we continue in Sin; and pretend that Sorrow for it is sufficient? God forbid!*

Z

How

SERM. *How shall we, Christians, who, by our*

XV. *Profession, are dead to Sin, live any longer*
 *therein? Let not such an Use be made*

of our great Lord's indulgent Kindness to us in the Gospel: but let all who know what Repentance is, and what it implies in it, live worthy of that Repentance, by which they hope for Salvation; and of that Vocation wherewith they are called.

IN a word: If you will have your Sins blotted out; you must repent, and be converted, in the Words of the Text: that is, actually turned from them. If you have been wilful, habitual Sinners; and think of being saved by Repentance; here is the Line marked out. The first Step is Sorrow for your Sins: but it is but the first. The second is a Disposition to amend your Lives. But there is no stopping here. You cannot think this Sorrow, and this Disposition, sincere, unless they shew themselves in good Effects. There must be an actual Amendment; an actual entering upon, and Progress in, a virtuous and holy Life; whilst God gives Opportunity. Without this, there is not the least Security of Happiness:

piness : and, if you trust to any other SERM.
Methods, you rely *upon other* Terms than XV.
what are proposed in the Gospel of Jesus
Christ. 





*The Example of the Thief upon the Cross,
considered.*

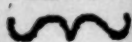
S E R M O N XVI.

LUKE xxiii. 42, 43.

*And He said unto Jesus, Lord, Remember
me when Thou comest into thy Kingdom.*

*And Jesus said unto Him, Verily, I say
unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in
Paradise.*

SERM.
XVI.



THESE Words contain in them
an Account of the happy End-
ing of the Life of *one* of those
Malefactors, who were crucified
with our blessed Lord. For, tho' we read,
in *Two* other of the *Evangelists*, that the
Thieves

Thieves which were crucified with Him, reviled Him; yet, that we are not necessarily to understand this of *both* the *Malefactors*, is evident from the like Form of Speech used by the same Writers, concerning any Matter, the minute Circumstances of which they do not undertake exactly to relate. Thus, in the same *Gospels*, *that* is sometimes said to be spoken by the *Disciples*, to *Jesus*, which was spoken by *one* of them only: because it was not thought necessary to be more particular. And the *Plural Number* is often thus used for the *Singular*, either, when the Story related is so known, as that no Mistake can proceed from thence; or, when the Matter spoken of, is of that nature as not to admit a literal Interpretation without a gross Absurdity; or, when the *Historian*, as I have said, doth not undertake to relate every particular Circumstance of a Story, especially of one generally and universally known at the Time of his writing. On these Accounts, this Way and Figure of speaking hath been allowed and practised.

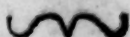
SERM.
XVI.

BUT St. *Luke*, designing, in this part of his History, to be more particular, hath

SERM. transmitted it down to us that what the o-
 XVI. ther Evangelists record concerning the *Male-*
 ~~~~~ *factor*s, is to be understood only of *one* of  
 them; and that the *other* was of a much  
 better Disposition; that He reprov'd his  
 Fellow-Sufferer for his rude and unjust re-  
 viling; and laid hold on that Opportunity,  
 to confess a great Degree of Faith in a cru-  
 cified Saviour.

THE favourable Reception which this  
 penitent Believer met with, in his last Mo-  
 ments; and the comfortable Answer which  
 He received from our Lord, seems to have  
 had an Effect, quite contrary to what our  
 Lord intended, and wished, upon many  
 Christians of later Ages. And, therefore,  
 this part of the *Evangelical History* deser-  
 veth our particular Consideration: that We  
 may judge truly what is to be concluded  
 from it; and avoid any Mistakes that may  
 prove fatal to our Eternal Interest. And,  
 after having, in my last Discourse, laid down  
 the true Notion of *Repentance*; I cannot  
 do any thing better than to endeavour to  
 obviate, or refute, the common Error, re-  
 ceived and embraced by too many, *viz.*  
 that the Acceptance of this Malefactor is  
 an

an Encouragement to any Christians to place their Hopes of Salvation, upon a *Death-bed Sorrow*, which they mis-call by the Name of Repentance. In order to this End,

S E R M.  
XVI.  


I. I SHALL endeavour briefly to give a true and just Account of the Case of this *Malefactor*, who was thus mercifully received by our Saviour, in his last Moments.

II. I DESIGN to shew that this was not an extraordinary Act of Favour, out of the General Rule; nor any thing depending on the secret Will and Intention of Almighty God: but perfectly agreeable to the professed and declared Tenour of the Gospel-Covenant; and what any Person, in the same Circumstances, may claim, upon the express *Terms* of the *Gospel*.

III. IN order the more effectually to prevent all Mistake, I shall point out to you, and describe, the Persons who are in the same Circumstances; and may be as certain of Favour as this *believing Malefactor*. And,

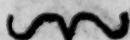
IV. I SHALL endeavour plainly to shew the extreme Unreasonableness, and great

SER M. Danger, of the common Mistakes about  
 XVI. this Instance of God's Mercy; and the Va-  
 nity of those Pretenses which are built by  
 some Men, upon this Example.

I. I SHALL endeavour briefly to give you a true and just Account of the Case of this *Malefactor*, who was so graciously received by our blessed Saviour, in his last Moments.

AND here, there is no reason to doubt but that He was a Person, who had never enjoyed, before this, a fair opportunity of hearing a just Account of our blessed Lord, and his Actions, and Pretensions: it being much more likely that a Person of his sort of Life should first hear and consider, the Character, and Works, and Behaviour of our Lord, during his Imprisonment, than at any time before, whilst He was following his wicked Trade of Robbery. It is manifest from his own Words, as well to his Fellow-Sufferer, as to our Lord himself, that He had gotten some Knowledge, both of our Lord's Personal Character; and of his professing himself a King. Now, the Way of Life which he followed, before his Imprisonment, engaged him to keep as  
 much





much out of the Cities and Places of ordinary Conversation; as much out of the Eyes and Observation of the World, as He could possibly do; and consequently must necessarily be supposed to have hindred him of all fair Opportunities of knowing the Truth concerning our blessed Lord. But, just before his Crucifixion, He could not well avoid hearing the Rumours spread about concerning Him, and learning the true Character, and Pretensions of our Lord. And He seems to have weighed all that He heard, before his Crucifixion, so well, as to bring with Him to his Cross, a Resolution to profess himself his Disciple; and a sincere Disposition to shew himself such, in all respects possible, in that small Remainder of his Time.

FROM such a Resolution as this, such a Person as He might well have been removed by the Behaviour of his Fellow-Sufferer; and by that Current of Affronts, which at that time ran so violently against our Lord, now seemingly destitute of all Help from *God*, and condemned and outraged, as an Impostor, by *Men*. Or, at least, He might have been led to have contented

SERM. tented himself, with entreating our Lord,  
 XVI. tho' somewhat more seriously than others,  
 ~~~~~ to come down from the Cross, and to save  
 himself, and his Fellow-Sufferers. But He
 appears to have understood a great deal, in
 a very little Time, concerning the true
 Nature of Christ's Kingdom: and so, ac-
 knowledging the Heinousness of his own
 Sins, and the Justice of God in his Punish-
 ment of them; all that He desires of our
 Lord, is, that He would remember Him,
 when He should come into his King-
 dom.

THIS Malefactor, therefore, you see,
 cannot be supposed, in the former Course
 of his Life, when his evil Designs kept
 him out of the City, and out of Society,
 to have had any Opportunity of enquiring,
 or hearing, concerning our blessed Lord.
 But, after his Imprisonment, it is very pos-
 sible, and very probable, that He came to
 a Knowledge of our Saviour, and of his
 Offers to Mankind. It is certain, from the
 express Words of the *Evangelist*, that, on
 his Cross, He gave Testimony to the un-
 spotted Character of our Lord; and Proof
 of his believing the Truth of his Preten-
 sions.

sions. And laying these Things together, S E R M.
his Words to our Saviour may reasonably XVI.
be supposed to imply in them as much, as
if he had said thus. “ I believe that thou
“ art truly the Messiah, and Saviour of
“ the World; as thou professest thy self
“ to be: And, notwithstanding this thy
“ ignominious Death upon the Cross,
“ that Thou hast a glorious and happy
“ Kingdom to enter upon; though not
“ of this World. I take this Opportunity
“ of professing my self thy Disciple: which
“ is the first I have enjoyed. This I do,
“ amidst the Reproaches of thy Enemies,
“ and the Insults of my Fellow-Sufferer.
“ And, therefore, I beg that I may have
“ the Benefit of this my Profession; and
“ may be accepted by Thee, as thou hast
“ promised to accept all such as do sin-
“ cerely believe in Thee, and to acquit
“ them from the Guilt of all their former
“ Sins for the sake of this Belief.” This,
I say, may most reasonably be supposed to
be implied in the Words of this *Malefac-*
tor to our Lord: it being certain from the
History that He had enquired both after
the *Character*, and after the *Proposals*, of
our

7. SERM. our Lord : and found the *former* to be un-
 XVI. spotted; and the *latter* to be Offers of
 ~~~~~ Mercy, and Happiness, in his Kingdom, to  
 his Disciples.

IT appears, therefore, that He was one, who was called to the Knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, in the last Hours, and had no Opportunity of professing his Belief in Him, but in the last Minutes, of his Life; when the *Night* of Death was just coming upon Him, in which *no Man can Work*: one, who believed, as soon as He possibly could hear a true Account of our Lord; and courageously professed his Belief, as soon as He had Opportunity to do it; and this at a time when all about him were reviling Him. In short, He did whatever it was in his Power to do, during that Space of Time, which He had left, after He was called to the Knowledge of the Gospel: and therefore, was accepted to Favour by our blessed Lord; and a Promise was made Him, that he should immediately upon his Death, be in an happy Place with Him. And here, you will easily observe that this gracious Acceptance of him was not merely, or chiefly, on the account of his Sor-

row



row for his past Sins ; but for the sake of S E R M.  
his believing in *Jesus Christ*, as soon as XVI.  
he could ; and of his taking this first Op-  
portunity of professing himself his Disciple ;  
that is, for the sake of his doing all he  
could to manifest the Sincerity of his Faith,  
from the Time of his believing, to the  
End of his Life. And this leads me to the  
*second* thing which I undertook to shew ;  
*viz.*

II. T H A T this was not an extraordinary  
Act of Favour, out of the general Rule ;  
nor any thing depending upon the secret  
Will, or unrevealed Pleasure, of *Almighty*  
*God* : but perfectly agreeable to the pro-  
fessed, and declared, Tenour of the Gos-  
pel ; and what any Person, in the same  
Circumstances, may claim, upon the Pro-  
mises of God, sufficiently promulgated in  
the Gospel. This I would willingly make  
as plain as possible, because this Instance  
of the Thief on the Cross hath been ge-  
nerally interpreted as an Instance of Al-  
mighty God's professed Acceptance of the  
Sorrow of a Sinner at his Death, instead of  
the Practice of Holiness, and Virtue, du-  
ring his Life : and, under this Notion,  
hath

SERM. hath been so recommended to the guilty  
 XVI. Consciences of the most habitual Sinners,  
 as to give them as strong an Assurance of  
 God's Favour, on their Death-beds, as the  
 best of Christians can in reason possess;  
 and so applied to themselves, by wilful Sin-  
 ners, in the Time of their Health, as to  
 encourage them to place all their Hopes in  
 the bitter Sorrow of their last Moments,  
 instead of rectifying the Disorders, and  
 Wickedness, of their Lives. But that this  
 all proceeds from a mistaken Notion of this  
 Matter, will appear to you, by proving, as  
 I design under this *second Head*, these Two  
 Particulars; viz.

1. THAT it is highly absurd to imagine  
 that Almighty God should, by any such  
 publick Instance as this, profess to the World  
 that He doth, on any account, or in Mercy  
 to any Person, depart from those Measures  
 which He hath, as publickly, fixed, and  
 promulgated. And,

2. THAT this Instance, as I have  
 before represented it, is perfectly agree-  
 able to the *Terms* of the *Gospel*, offered  
 equally to all who hear of it; and plain-  
 ly

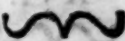
ly laid down by Christ, and his Apo-  
stles. S E R M.  
XVI.

I. I SAY, it is highly absurd to imagine that Almighty God should, by any such publick Instance, as this of the Thief on the Cross, profess to the World that He doth, on any Account, or in Mercy to any Person, depart from those Measures, which he hath, as publickly, fixed and promulgated.

W H E T H E R any Being be obliged, in the nature of the thing, to execute his Threatnings in their utmost Rigour, as he is to perform his Promises to the utmost; is another Question. Nay, whether it may not be actually so, in fact, at last, that Almighty God will remit of that Punishment he hath threatned; and not execute the utmost of that Wrath which He has declared by his *Son* against harden'd impenitent Sinners, is a Point wholly distinct from that before us. I must own that the affirmative side of this Question seems to derogate from the Sincerity of the Divine Revelation; and not well to consist with the Nature of the highest Simplicity: it being a much worthier Supposition

SERM. position concerning Almighty God, that  
 XVI. he should declare the exact Truth of the  
 ~~~~~ Matter, and leave it to work upon the  
 Minds of Men as far as it could; than
 that he should declare what will never
 come to pass, and so endeavour to work
 upon them by a false Persuasion, which
 hath nothing in Nature to answer it. But
 I say that it is not so absurd to maintain
 that so it may possibly, or probably, be
 found at last; as to say that Almighty God
 hath declared, by any public Instance, that
 he doth, in the Case of some of the most
 notorious Sinners, depart from the Measures
 which he hath openly declared he will stand
 to.

To come to the Case before us; Almighty God declareth, as plainly as Words can declare any thing, that *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*: that *his Wrath shall be upon all the Workers of Iniquity*; especially upon such as profess his Gospel, and yet live in an open Violation of the Laws of it, and an open Neglect of these Declarations in it. And yet, this Instance, of the Thief on the Cross, hath been sometimes so interpreted,

puted, as to make Almighty God declare S E R M.
by it to the World, that he will accept XVI.
of the Death-bed Sorrow of a Sinner; 
though he hath had sufficient Warning
through his Life; though he hath been a
professed Christian, and hath had the fair-
est Opportunities of knowing the true
Terms of Christian Justification. Now
this, I say, it is absurd to imagine con-
cerning Almighty God: because this is
publicly to destroy the Effect, and De-
sign, of his other Declarations; and to
give as public an Encouragement as pos-
sible, to Men, to continue in their
Sins.

FOR when once a Man hath entertain-
ed this Notion, that the Case of this *Male-*
factor is thus to be interpreted; how easy
is the Passage of his Thoughts from this,
to the Imagination that his own Sorrow
on his Death-bed shall, after the same
manner, be accepted, instead of a reli-
gious and virtuous Life? For, why should
he not think so? Or, what should hin-
der? Almighty God must not be supposed
an arbitrary Being; a Power acting by Hu-
mour, and not guided by just and equita-

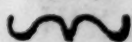
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ble

S E R M. ble Maxims: but equal in his Regards to
 XVI. all, in Circumstances exactly equal. And
 if so, his Proceedings, upon those Max-
 ims, must be the same with all in the
 same Condition. He hath no respect to
 the Persons of Men: nor can there be
 any Reason in the World assigned, why
 he should deal, in the Distribution of his
 Eternal Rewards or Punishments, more
 favourably with one, than with another,
 who is not under the Circumstances of
 greater Guilt, at his Departure out of this
 State. And, therefore, if he hath shewn
 such Favour to one of the vilest of Sin-
 ners, on account of a pungent Sorrow,
 at the Hour of Death, contrary to the
 seeming Tendency of all his Declarations;
 so will he likewise to me, may the vilest
 of Men still say. And what can be the
 Consequence of this, but an impenitent
 Life, and profligate Manners, in the Time
 of Health?

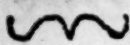
AND thus far, indeed, I agree with
 such Persons, that, whatever the Case of
 this *Malefactor* was; all who are exactly
 in the same, or a like, Case, may reason-
 ably expect, and will certainly experience,
 the

the same Favour which he did. But the Supposition, that Christians, who have Repentance and Amendment, day after day, inculcated upon them; who stand out against all Calls to Reformation; and rely at last upon the Sorrow of a sick Bed, are in the same Case with this *Malefactor*; or that he, considered as in the same Case with them, is declared in the *New Testament*, to have found Favour with God, and to have been entituled to the Happiness of Heaven: This Supposition, I say, will be ever incredible to us, till We can come to suppose Almighty God declaring against his own plainest Declarations; and ruining his own Design of the World's Reformation; or else acting after an arbitrary and humourfome manner; accepting of one Man to Eternal Life, and condemning another to Eternal Death, who is, as to himself, in the same Circumstances; and hath been led, by this Example, to expect the same Acceptance. But who can suppose this of the God of Mercy, Truth, and Equity? Or, of that God who hath revealed his Wrath against all the Workers of Iniquity? But,

S E R M.
XVI.


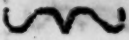
SERM.

XVI.



2. As these Absurdities should affrighten us from fixing such a Procedure upon Almighty God; and make us rather willing to suppose our selves wholly mistaken in our Interpretation of this Dealing of his with the Thief on the Cross, than to suppose any such Inconsistencies in his Ways: so, I must observe that there is another very good Account to be given of this Matter, perfectly agreeable to the Tenour of the Gospel, as the *Terms* of it were plainly preached by our Lord and his Apostles; and vastly distant from any such Interpretation, as that which I have now been mentioning.

IN order to make this evident, I must observe to you that it is the declared Tenor of the Gospel, that God would justify all who sincerely comply with the Offers of it, and heartily profess Faith in *Jesus Christ*; that all, I say, who do thus, upon good Motives, shall be released from the Guilt of their former Sins, and accepted by God, and dealt with as just Persons, for this very believing sincerely in his Son Jesus Christ: and this, whether they live a short, or a long, Time after their first Belief and Profession;

feſſion; provided they ſhew the Reality of SERM.
their Faith in that Time, and do not relapſe XVI.
into a Courſe of Infidelity, or Wickedneſs. 
Thus, we find, our Lord, in the Goſpels,
receiving to his Favour, all who embrace
his Offers; and accepting them, upon their
firſt Acceptance of his Religion, and his
Terms. And we find, more evidently, the
Apoſtles inſtructed by the Holy Ghoſt to
preach the Doctrine of Acceptance, and Re-
miſſion of all their former Sins, to all who
ſhould lay hold on the Opportunity offered
them, and embrace the Faith of Jeſus Chriſt,
and enter themſelves into his Service. Up-
on this *Faith*, and Profeſſion of it, Profe-
lytes were baptized; and they were baptized
for the Remiſſion of their Sins; and Juſti-
fication before God was openly promiſed, and
declared, to them, upon this their firſt ſin-
cere, and undiſſembled Faith.

Now, ſuppoſing any of theſe Perſons to
be taken away immediately: their former
Sins being once pardoned, the Force of
this Pardon muſt remain; and they muſt be
finally acquitted and juſtified before God.
But ſuppoſing any of theſe Profeſlytes to live,
and afterwards to relapſe into their former

SERM.
XVI.

Course of Sin : They not only, by the Tenour of the Gospel, lose all the Benefit of this first Justification ; but can have no Ground for Hope of a final Justification, at the great Day, without the actual Amendment and Reformation of their Lives. On the other hand, if they go on, in living as becomes Christians ; they are entitled to a final Acquittance, and to great Degrees of Happiness in the World to come.

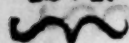
THERE are, therefore, Two sorts of Persons, considered as acquitted in the Gospel. 1. Such as hear the Gospel ; and sincerely receive, and heartily accept it ; and openly profess it : who yet have no Time allowed them, by the Providence of God, to bring forth the Fruits of a continued Course of Righteousness ; though they certainly have such a Faith as would bring forth these Fruits. And, 2. Such Persons as sincerely receive it ; and close in with the Terms of it ; and, having Time allowed them, live, and act, in the general Course of their Lives, by the Rules of Righteousness, laid down in it. As there are, likewise, Two sorts of Persons condemned, in the same Gospel. 1. Such, as having Opportunity

portunity to hear it proposed to them; either revile and persecute it; or refuse to attend to it, and receive it. And, 2. Such as, having heard it, receive and profess it; and enter themselves into the Bonds of it: but afterwards relapse into an Habit of Sin, in which they continue till Death overtake them.

THERE being, therefore, Two sorts of Persons, to whom Acquittance, or Justification, is openly promised in the Gospel; we may be sure, no one shall be denied that Favour, who belongs to either of the Two. And that the Malefactor on the Cross, certainly belonged to the former sort; and consequently, was accepted by Christ, not by any arbitrary, or extraordinary Act of Favour, but upon the ordinary Terms of his Dispensation, is, I think, very evident. For it appears that He was a Person, who, when He had a fair Opportunity, did seriously consider the Character, and Pretensions of our Lord; who, upon that Consideration, believed in Him, and received him, as the Messiah; and who took the first Opportunity He had, to declare and profess this: though He had no Hopes of any Benefit

SERM.

XVI.



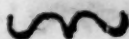
from hence, unless in a future State; and was rather discouraged from it, than incited to it, by the Tempers, and Behaviour, of all about Him. He was called to the Knowledge of the Gospel; He obeyed that Call; and He did whatever was in his Power, during the short Time God afforded him, to demonstrate the Sincerity of his Faith. What should hinder, therefore, but that he should be received by our Lord, who came to offer Acquittance, and Justification, to all who should believe him to be the *Messiah*; and should act agreeably to the Faith, and Practice enjoyned by him, during the remainder of their Lives, whether long, or short?

I CANNOT, therefore, but think it plain from hence, that there is nothing extraordinary, or new, in this Instance of the Justification of the Thief on the Cross: that he was not declared to be accepted by God on the account of his Sorrow, or because he was dying, and at that time expressed a Sense of his Sins; but because he laid hold on the first fair Opportunity, which offered it self, of believing in Christ; of professing himself his Disciple, and of owning Him

Him for his Master; and, consequently, that he was accepted to Favour, upon the ordinary Terms of the Gospel, declared in other Places of the New Testament, upon which any other sincere Believer, would likewise have been accepted and justified; and upon which, all Christians inherit the same Justification, and reap the Fruit of it, if they do not, by falling again into a Course of Sin, and continuing in it, forfeit their Title to so great a Blessing.

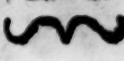
WHAT hath been said may likewise serve to give us some Account why the other Evangelists might not think it necessary to be minute, and particular, in the Relation of the Behaviour, and happy End, of the better of the Two Malefactors: *viz.* because nothing material could be learnt, or drawn, from it, but what might be learnt from other plain Parts of the Gospel; that whoever should believe in Jesus Christ, and make use of the Opportunities He enjoys to profess and shew himself to be sincerely his Disciple, should, upon that Belief, and Profession, be acquitted from the Guilt of all his past Sins; and be put into a State of Favour, and Acceptance, with

S E R M.
XVI.



SERM. with God; whether He should live a long,
 XVI. or a short Time, after his embracing the
 ~~~~~ Christian Faith. And now, what hath  
 been already laid down will easily guide us  
 to determine what I proposed in the *third*  
 place: *viz.*

III. WHO those Persons are, that may  
 safely argue, to their own Comfort, from  
 this Example of the Thief on the Cross;  
 and may be as secure of God's Favour, as  
 He was. And it is plain, they must be such,  
 as are in his Circumstances. I do not  
 mean, such as are leaving this World: for  
 that was but an accidental Matter; and  
 had no Weight towards his Acceptance;  
 which, I have shewn, must have been the  
 same, upon the Gospel Terms, whether  
 He had then been dying, or not. But I  
 mean, such Persons, as do not resist the  
 Evidence of the Gospel of Christ; but re-  
 ceive it upon due Consideration; and take  
 the Opportunity, offered them by the Pro-  
 vidence of God, to profess their Faith in  
 Jesus Christ, and to acknowledge them-  
 selves his Disciples. They must be Persons,  
 who being come to Years of Discretion,  
 have a fair Opportunity offered them of  
 hearing

hearing the Evidence, and knowing the S E R M.  
Nature, of the Christian Religion. They XVI.  
must be Persons who, upon hearing and   
weighing this Evidence, do sincerely accept  
it as the Will of God ; who openly and  
heartily, profess this ; and who, during the  
rest of their Time, behave themselves a-  
greeably to their Profession.

AND we cannot but observe from  
hence, of how small Concern, the Instance  
now before us is to Persons bred up in the  
Knowledge of the Christian Religion ;  
called upon, day after day, to regard the  
Nature and Obligations, of it : to Persons  
who have always professed themselves Chri-  
stians ; and yet live on, in an Habit of Sin  
condemned by their own Profession, in  
hopes that the Sorrow of their latest Mo-  
ments shall atone for the Vices of their past  
Lives.

IF, therefore, any one would entertain  
himself with any just Hopes, drawn from  
God's Mercy to this crucified Malefactor ;  
He must first, in all reason, consider, whe-  
ther He himself be in the like Circumstan-  
ces : for otherwise, what Comfort can any  
Man, in his Senses, draw from thence ?

And

SERM. And no one, I think, can, by any means,  
XVI. be said to be in the like Circumstances,  
who is come to Years of Judgment, and Discretion, in a Country of professed Christians; and hath, either in his Mind, or in his Manners, dishonoured, or neglected, the Christian Religion. But this will more naturally come under the next Head of my present Design: which I have not now Time to prosecute.

I SHALL only, therefore, add at present, that for us, who are called betimes to the Knowledge of Christianity; who have Opportunities of knowing our Duty; and profess our selves, from the beginning of our Lives, the Disciples of Jesus Christ: for us, I say, to have recourse to any such Instance as this, in order to defer our Repentance and Amendment, is the Extremity of Folly, and Weakness. Whatever it is, that makes us easy in the habitual Practice of any of the Vices condemned in the Gospel, is certainly a Cheat and Imposition upon our selves; a false and groundless Amusement. And, therefore, from whence-soever it is, that we may have drawn any such Notions; we may assure our selves,  
(and



(and it is our Eternal Interest to be assured S E R M.  
of it,) that we are greatly mistaken in them. XVI.  
Almighty God doth, as certainly and as  
plainly, require of us the Practice of all  
Righteousness, as He promiseth us all Hap-  
piness. No Man ever was uneasy at the  
Review of such a Practice: but many a  
Man hath been rendered miserable on his  
Death-bed here; and will be eternally un-  
done hereafter; by trusting, in the Time  
of his Health, to any other false and faithless  
Methods. And God grant that We may  
consider these Things, before they be hid  
from our Eyes! *Amen.*





*The Example of the Thief upon the Cross,  
considered.*

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## SERMON XVII.

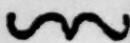
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LUKE xxiii. 42, 43.

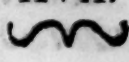
*And He said unto Jesus, Lord, Remember  
me when Thou comest into thy Kingdom.*

*And Jesus said unto Him, Verily, I say  
unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me  
in Paradise.*

SERM.  
XVII.



IN my last Discourse, (which  
was upon the Account given  
us, in these Words, of the  
happy Ending of the Life of  
one of the *Malefactors* crucified with our  
blessed Lord,) I proposed *four* Heads:  
*three* of which I then went over; and  
shall

shall now proceed to the *fourth*, after I S E R M.  
have made way for it, by reminding you XVII.  
of what I then, as I hope, very evidently  
proved. 

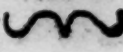
IN discoursing on the *first*, I shewed  
you, that this *Malefactor* was one who, as  
soon as He had a fair Opportunity of know-  
ing the Truth concerning the Character  
of our blessed Lord, and of hearing the  
Evidence of his Pretensions, did sincerely  
lay hold on it; and profess himself his Dis-  
ciple; and behave himself as such, amidst  
the Calumnies and Reproaches of all about  
him: and that for this Belief, and Profes-  
sion; not merely, or chiefly, on account of  
his Sense of his past Sins; He was accepted,  
by our Lord, to Mercy.

UNDER the *second* Head, I went on  
to show you, that it was one professed part  
of the Gospel, preached both by Christ and  
his Apostles, that whosoever should lay  
hold on the Opportunity offered by the  
Providence of God; and should accept of  
the Terms proposed in the Gospel; and  
believe in Jesus Christ with an honest and  
sincere Heart; and make open Profession  
of this Belief: that every such Person,  
I say,

S E R M. I say, should be accepted to Favour ; and  
XVII. effectually acquitted from the Guilt of his  
past Sins, whether He should live a short,  
or a long, Time after this Profession ; sup-  
posing Him to behave himself, during that  
Time , agreeably to it. And, in conse-  
quence of this, I proved to you that this  
Thief on the Cross, having sincerely laid  
hold on the Opportunity offered to Him  
by Providence ; having come to the Know-  
ledge of our Lord's Character, and of the  
Evidence He gave of the Truth of his Di-  
vine Mission ; and having, upon this, pro-  
fessed himself his Disciple, and shewn his  
Sincerity by behaving himself in all respects,  
as became such an one, during that short  
Time which was allowed him, after He  
was called to the Knowledge and Faith of  
Christ ; that this Malefactor, I say, ha-  
ving acted thus, was accepted upon the or-  
dinary, known, *Terms* of the *Gospel* ; not  
upon the secret and hidden Will of Al-  
mighty God deviating from, or going be-  
yond, the common Rules of the *Christian*  
*Institution* ; and that, therefore, this is no  
Instance of Almighty God's Acceptance of  
the Sorrow of a dying Man, instead of the  
Practice,



Practice of Virtue during his Life; much less, an Instance of his Acceptance of those, on the account of their Death-bed Sorrow, who have known and professed the Christian Religion through their whole Lives, and have wilfully and habitually lived in express Contradiction to its Design, and its Precepts, during the Time of that Profession.

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XVII.  


UNDER the *third* Head, I shewed you that those Persons only are in the Case of this Malefactor, so as to argue to their own Satisfaction, from his Example, upon any reasonable Grounds, who, whether living or dying; whether in perfect Health, or within the Prospect of Death; lay hold on the first fair Opportunity offered them: and seriously consider the Evidence there is for the Christian Religion; and sincerely receive it upon that Evidence; and openly profess themselves the Disciples of Jesus Christ; and behave themselves, as becomes his Disciples, through the remaining part of their Lives, whether long, or short. And such Persons as these, I need not again observe to you, would have

B b

been

SERM.  
XVII.

been entitled to the Justification, and Favour, promised in the Gospel, upon the plain and express Words of our Lord and his Apostles; whether there had been any such Instance, as this of the believing and penitent Malefactor, recorded in the Gospel, or not.

HAVING thus recalled to your Minds what I have already advanced, I may with the more Advantage proceed to the *fourth* thing which I proposed, *viz.*

IV. To show plainly the extreme Unreasonableness, and great Danger, of the common Mistakes about this Instance of God's Mercy; and the Vanity of those Pretenses which some Men have built upon this Example. And here I shall mention particularly the Mistakes of Two sorts of Persons: *viz.* The Mistake of those who misapply this Instance to their own Ruine; and the Mistake of those who take occasion from it to implant in others very wrong, and very pernicious, Notions concerning *Despair*, and *Presumption*.

I. FROM what hath been said, it manifestly appears how great, as well as fatal, a Mistake

a Mistake that is, which some Persons have SERM.  
persuaded themselves to entertain, from XVII.  
this Instance of the crucified Thief: that  
God will accept them at last, for the sake  
of a Death-bed Sorrow and Concern for  
their past Sins; though they have been,  
all through their Lives, professed Christians,  
and have neglected to obey those Laws,  
which they knew to be imposed upon them  
by the Christian Religion, as the Rules of  
their Actions. The Weakness and extreme  
Folly of arguing at this rate, from this In-  
stance, will appear plainly to any one, who  
will seriously consider the Case of such pro-  
fessed Christians; and compare it with  
what hath been before said concerning the  
Case of that Malefactor, and the Condi-  
tions of Acceptance laid down in the Gos-  
pel.

For it is evident, from the Account  
which I have given of both these, that His  
Case was such as comes within the pro-  
fessed Terms of the Gospel: upon which  
all who lay hold on the Opportunity given  
them; and hear, and receive, and pro-  
fess, the Christian Religion sincerely; are

S E R M. accepted immediately to Favour, and released from the Guilt of their former Sins.

XVII.

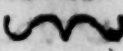
Whereas the Case of such professed Christians as I have been now speaking of, is a condemned Case, upon the professed Terms of the same Gospel. For if the Gospel saith any thing at all, it plainly affirms this, that those Persons who, after they have received the Faith of Jesus Christ, and been made Partakers of this first Justification, do relapse into a Course, or Habit, of those Sins which are condemned in the Gospel; and continue in that Course till Death overtake them: that those Persons, I say, who do this, shall be excluded the Kingdom of Heaven; and, instead of God's Favour, shall feel his Wrath, and suffer the Vengeance of Eternal Fire. Now, as Almighty God did, in forgiving and accepting the believing Malefactor, keep exactly to the Terms, which our blessed Lord had, in his Name, promulgated: so, there is all the reason in the World to conclude that, in condemning and punishing that other sort of Persons, who have contradicted and scandalized



dalized his Gospel, by their Behaviour during their Christian Profession, He will likewise keep close to the Terms which He hath, in the Gospel, set before the Eyes of the World. And in this Gospel, there is another Law promulgated, as the Rule of Judgment in the Case of such Persons. They are called to the Knowledge of Christianity; they have Time allowed them to live in the Practice of its Precepts, and by that means to secure, and encrease, their future Happiness: and yet they transgress its Commands; and, to all their repeated Affronts to God and his Laws, they add the Assurance of imagining, and expecting, that He will deal with them, as He deals with Men, who sincerely receive, and profess the Christian Religion; and do whatever they can, in that shorter Time which is allowed them, to demonstrate the Sincerity of their inward Belief, and outward Profession.

ALMIGHTY God doth all his Works with the most exact Proportion: nor can it easily be imagined that perfect Wisdom, and perfect Power, can do otherwise.

SERM. And there is no doubt, therefore, but that  
XVII. He will dispense his Rewards and Punishments, with the greatest Equity, and Impartiality. Now can it be consistent with any Rules of Equity and Proportion, to make those equal in a State of Retribution, whose Cases, and Behaviour, have been vastly different, in a State of Tryal? But, besides this, it is sufficiently declared to us, in the Name of Almighty God, that He will very much consider, what Light hath been afforded; what Powers Persons have enjoyed; what Time hath been allowed them; what Improvement they have made of this Light; what use they have made of these Powers; and how they have spent this Time, that they have had granted to them. And though He will very favourably deal with those who enjoy lesser Degrees of Light, and Power; and no happy Opportunities of Improvement; as Equity requires: yet this is far from shewing that He will be equally favourable to those who have enjoyed greater Advantages, and happier Opportunities; and have made no other use of them,

them, but to affront and dishonour both S E R M.  
God, and Religion, the more. On the XVII.  
contrary, the only Ground of his Favour   
to the former sort, being their want of  
Light, and Opportunity; this rather implies  
in it, that where he hath afforded Light,  
and Opportunity, there He may justly, and  
will certainly, require a strict and severe  
Account of the Use and Improvement that  
have been made of them.

I N D E E D, in the *Parable* of the *La-*  
*bourers* hired, at several Hours, into the  
Vineyard, *Matth.* xx. 1. some have been  
apt to think that the Method of Proceed-  
ing is such, as to encourage Christians to  
depend upon what they shall be able to do  
in their last Moments; and to hope, on  
the account of That, to be made equal, in  
the Favour of God, to those who have  
served Him faithfully, through their whole  
Lives; and so, to conclude that it is no  
great Matter, how long soever they defer  
their Repentance. This *Parable* I shall,  
therefore, in my next Discourse, distinctly  
and fully consider. At present, I shall only  
observe that it was chiefly intended to fig-

S E R M. nify to the *Jews* that Almighty God  
 XVII. would make the *Gentiles* equal to them, in  
 all Privileges, if they did, in the *last Age*  
 of the *World* (as the *Gospel-Age* is called)  
 accept the Invitation given them; and be-  
 lieve, and obey, the Doctrine of the Gos-  
 pel: which Interpretation wholly takes a-  
 way the Ground of the Objection. And,  
 as far as it can be supposed to concern par-  
 ticular Persons, I must observe, that it can  
 only signify that God will reward all such  
 with his Favours, as do, whenever they are  
 called to the Knowledge of the Gospel,  
 heartily embrace it, and readily obey the  
 Precepts of it, how little Time soever be  
 allowed them for so doing.

B U T can any one, though never so wil-  
 ling to be imposed upon, in this Case, find  
 out, I will not say in this *Parable*, but in  
 the whole *New Testament*, any reward  
 for those who are called to the Knowledge  
 of the Gospel in the beginning of their  
 Lives, in the first Hours of their Day; and  
 yet either refuse to come in, upon so gra-  
 cious an Invitation; or else, professing to  
 obey that Call, and entering themselves in-



to his Religion, and pretending to accept S E R M.  
the Terms offered by our blessed Lord, not XVII.  
only prove useless and negligent of their  
Lord's Honour and Service: but even spend  
that Time which is due, upon their own  
Contract, to the Service of their Master,  
in ruining his good Designs; in dishonour-  
ing his Name; in abusing their Fellow-Ser-  
vants; or in some other sort of Practice,  
detrimental to their Master's true Interest,  
or inconsistent with the Office which they  
have taken upon themselves? Where do  
we read of any such Servants as these, re-  
warded and honoured, at last, by their Ma-  
ster? Whenever we meet with the mention  
of any such, in the *Gospel*, it is with a very  
sad Conclusion, at the End of their Story:  
and this merely for not improving the *Ta-*  
*lents* committed to them; for the neglect-  
ing to do God positive Service in their Sta-  
tions; for not using the Opportunities, and  
Abilities, put into their Hands by Providence,  
for their own Eternal Interest, and the Ho-  
nour of their great Master? How much  
more shall this heavy Sentence be pronoun-  
ced upon such as not only have not improv-  
ved

SERM.  
XVII.



ved the Time, and Abilities, and Advantages, put into their Hands; but have likewise used this Time, and these Abilities, and Advantages, which God in mercy hath afforded them, to the Disservice of Himself, and the Disgrace of his holy Religion; doing very great Mischief by their Example and Influence; affronting God, and making his Enemies to blaspheme? Where do we read, all through the Gospel, of any such Person, after a Continuance of Affronts and Indignities offered to Almighty God, during his Christian Profession, accepted at last to Mercy, on Account of the Sorrow of his dying Hour? That which hath, most of all, inclined Men to be deceived in this Case, is the Instance of the crucified Malefactor: and this Instance, we have now evidently seen, to be at the greatest distance from any Likeness to the Case of such as are professed Christians, and live on, in a Course of Sin, under the Influence of so groundless an Expectation. How great, therefore, as well as fatal, must the Mistake of those be, who being Christians, and having many and continued Opportunities

nities of living worthy of that Name, still SERM.  
continue wilfully in their Sins; and argue XVII.  
themselves into a fond Expectation of God's  
Mercy at last, from an *Instance* which bears  
no manner of relation to the Condition, and  
Circumstances, in which *They* are?

2. I SHALL now mention another Mistake, which is usually founded upon the Instance of the crucified Malefactor: and that is, the Mistake of those, who do not, indeed, make any ill use of it in the Conduct of their own Lives; but yet make use of it, to encourage the *Presumption*, and prevent the *Despair*, of dying Sinners, who have lived all their Lives long, in the Profession of Christianity, and in the Violation of its Laws; and this, to the great Prejudice of other Christians who survive them. This Mistake, I confess, as far as it is founded upon this Instance, is so much the same, with the former, in the Ground of it, that it can hardly be reckoned as distinct from it: and it hath been sufficiently confuted, under this View, by what I have said, upon the *former*, to shew that this *Instance* toucheth not the Case of such professed Christians.

SERM. ans. But, as it is applied to another Purpose; and as it is not only founded upon this Example of the *crucified Malefactor*, but upon very wrong, and groundless, Notions concerning *Presumption* and *Despair*; it seems to deserve a particular, and distinct place, in the present Debate, as it will give occasion for the settling the true Nature of those Two Dispositions of Mind: the misunderstanding of which hath certainly been the reason of representing what is generally called *Despair*, as the greatest of Sins; and of making what is truly a *criminal Presumption*, to be a necessary Duty.

Now here I shall lay down one Proposition, which is sufficient to determine this Matter: *viz.* That these Two Dispositions of Mind must be judged of, by the professed Terms of the Gospel; and not by any supposed Possibilities. And, according to these, I think it is evident that for One who hath, against all the Calls of God's Spirit, and all the Checks of his own Conscience, continued to live in a constant Course of Sin; for such an one, I say to hope, with any sort of Assurance, that God will bring him



to the Happiness, promised in the Gospel SERM.  
only to Holiness and Righteousness, is not XVII.  
a virtuous Hope; because it is an Hope without any Ground, or solid Foundation: but is a vain, and groundless *Presumption*; and such a *Presumption*, as seems, in truth, to affront Almighty God, by supposing that He will depart, for this Man's Sake, from his own declared and professed Terms. And, on the contrary, for such an one to *Despair*; that is, to think that He, having continued through the Time of his Health, and Conversation in the World, an habitual Sinner; and being that wicked Man, whom the *Gospel* constantly, and in multitudes of Passages, condemns; that He, I say, being such an one, shall be condemned at the great Day, as the *Gospel* saith: This is indeed his Misery; but is so far from being his Sin, that I do not see, if He believeth the *Gospel*, how He can possibly avoid thinking so. But, as if it were of no Importance to be guided by the Declarations of the *Gospel* it self, in this great Affair; dying Christians, who have lived a Life of habitual and wilful Wickedness, have been  
led

SER M. led into such Notions of these Two Things,  
 XVII. that they have come to think this ground-  
 less *Presumption* their Duty: and, what is  
 of worse consequence, many By-standers  
 have been fatally corrupted into a Security  
 in sinning, by the same Expectations from  
 this unreasonable Confidence in God.  
 Whereas there is nothing in this Confidence,  
 that can alter, or affect, the Nature of  
 Things: nor is there any Passage in the  
 whole *New Testament*, which recommends  
 such a *Confidence*, in such Circumstances;  
 or which implieth in it, that it is the Duty  
 of such Persons, or any Advantage to them  
 in the Eyes of God, to be confident of those  
 Mercies, of which, in truth, He hath so-  
 lemnly declared they shall never partake.

IT is true that many of the best sort of  
 Christians may, in a low and afflicted Con-  
 dition, entertain an unreasonable and  
 groundless Despondency, or Despair. They  
 may imagine that they have not been those  
 Christians, who shall be rewarded at last;  
 and be filled with very melancholy Appre-  
 hensions concerning their future Condition.  
 But this Imagination of theirs cannot affect  
 their

their future State : which will be determined by that God who knows all things as they are ; and will deal with them, according to what they really have been ; not according to what they imagine themselves to have been. And this Imagination, proceeding from an Excess of Humility, or from bodily Disorder, is only their present Unhappiness ; not their Sin : and is removed far from them, as soon as they themselves are removed out of this State. Whereas the *Despondency* of those professed Christians, who have resolutely continued wicked to the last, is truly well-grounded upon the Gospel-Declarations ; and, as it is so, is likewise part of their Punishment, begun in this World, in the inward Torment of their own Minds : which, if it might be removed from them, upon any Promise, or Declaration, of God, I should most willingly do it. But who would dare to incite them to assure themselves of the Favour of that God, who hath so plainly declared that They shall not see his Face ; and that He will be to such Sinners *a consuming Fire*.

N A Y,

SERM. NAY, is it not to bring a lasting Dis-  
XVII. grace upon the Cause of Virtue, to teach  
 that the confident Assurance of the most  
profligate Sinner, when He comes to die,  
(perhaps, a more confident Assurance than  
the best of Christians commonly have,) shall  
set him as much out of the reach of God's  
Displeasure; and in as secure a Condition;  
as that of the most virtuous Persons, who  
have spent their whole Lives in the Con-  
templation, and Practice, of the Laws of  
Christianity. The *Gospel* is far from saying  
any such thing: and, therefore, the *Preach-*  
*ers* of the *Gospel* must likewise be far from  
entertaining the Consciences of Christians  
with any such Fancies; who, if they have  
any Sense themselves, will not easily swal-  
low such unreasonable Doctrines.

I GRANT, indeed, that the best thing  
which the most wicked of Christians can do,  
when they come within View of Death;  
and what all about them ought to encour-  
age them to do; is to make themselves as  
sensible, as they possibly can, of the Evil of  
their past Ways; to move themselves, upon  
the best Considerations, to abhor and de-  
test



test them ; and solemnly to warn all about S E R M.  
XVII.  
them from the Paths, in which themselves  
have walked. But, after all this, who could  
say that these Persons have come up, in any  
tolerable degree, to the Terms of the Gos-  
pel? Or, who could encourage any such  
notorious Sinners to assure themselves of the  
Mercy of God, unless a plain Text of Scrip-  
ture, or Law of Reason, could be found,  
suitable to their Case, or promising them  
Happiness? They must still be left (as far  
as the Gospel hath concerned it self) in  
the State, in which That pronounceth wil-  
ful and habitual Sinners to be. The utmost  
that can be said is, that they must be left to  
the *uncovenanted Mercies* of God: and the  
highest degree of hope which they can  
have, must be founded upon this, that Al-  
mighty God may possibly depart from his  
settled Method; and recede from the Terms  
which He hath openly professed, for the sake  
of those, who have lived, Year after Year,  
in an open Violation of his Laws; against  
all the Checks of their Consciences, and all  
the Calls of his Gospel. Which let *them*  
believe, who can swallow, and embrace,  
any

SERM. any Absurdities, rather than forsake their  
XVII. Sins.



HAVING, as I hope, very evidently shewn that there is nothing, in this Instance of the believing and penitent Malefactor, which can, with the least Colour of Reason, encourage any, who have been, through many Years, professed Christians, and habitual Sinners, to depend upon the Sorrow of their Death-beds, for Acceptance with God; and having thus finished what I proposed to discourse of from this Example: I shall now take occasion to enquire whether, in the nature of the thing it self, there be any greater Ground for Hope, than, We have seen, there is in the Instance We have been considering. And this, I think, will be very proper, not only because the Subject naturally enough leads us to it; but because it is very observable that one great Support of such unhappy Persons, as go on in a Course of Sin, and yet retain some Sense of Religion, and make Profession of Christianity, is the Hope which they have placed in the Sorrow of their Death-beds, as if there were some peculiar Charm,  
and

and Efficacy, in *that*, above any other Sorrow, (which they falsely call Repentance,) conceived, or expressed, in any other Part of their Lives. S E R M.  
XVII.

Now, in what is it that this last Sorrow hath the Advantage over any other? In what it agrees with the Sorrow, and Regret, which a Man hath felt in the Time of his Health, it cannot be prefer'd before it: because it differs not from it. And in what it really differs from it, I fear, it will be found to have the Disadvantage on its side. For it seems to me that it is much less likely to be sincere, or such as would, upon Trial, prove effectual, than the other: it being probably rather extorted by the Prospect and Fear of Death, than by the Persuasion of Reason; and frequently accompanied with such Terrors, as make it rather a Distraction, than a rational Grief, or a conscientious Sorrow. Whereas, a Regret and Concern for past Sins, in Time of Health, and whilst a Man hath not so near a Prospect of a State of Retribution, may be supposed more sincere, and more likely to influence Him: because it may

C c 2

justly

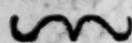
SER M. justly be thought to be more the Result of  
 XVII. Reason, and Judgment; and rather proceeding from a well-grounded Persuasion of the Man's own Mind, and the just Consideration of the Nature of Things, than from the terrible Dread of immediate Punishment.

AND yet how is this last Sorrow usually preferr'd; and accounted of a more excellent Nature than any of the former? One would think, merely because it is the last. Whereas *that* can make no difference in the Eyes of God: who always judgeth truly, from the nature of the Thing; and not from the *Time*, or any of those inconsiderable Circumstances, which often hide the true nature of things from mortal Eyes, and finite Understandings. Nay, we our selves cannot judge whether our own present Sorrow, and Compunction, be of that nature as that they would work in us true Repentance and Amendment; were we entrusted with more Opportunities of making the Trial. And this is another Reason why we should build nothing upon it, either in our own Case, or that of others; because, even supposing



supposing that it would be sincere, and effectual in its Influences, were more Time allowed; yet this is a Matter wholly out of the reach of our Knowledge, and wholly impossible for us to judge of. S E R M.  
XVII.

BUT, indeed, it is a very material Observation, that wicked Men have much less reason to think this last Sorrow thoroughly and undoubtedly sincere, than they have heretofore had to think any of their former Sorrows so; which yet, they know, have ended in nothing considerable. There are few professed Christians, even amongst the wickedest of them, who have not, one time or other, had some just and concerning Thoughts about that Course of Sin, and those wilful Vices, in which they have indulged themselves; who have not, one time or other, detested and resolved to forsake them, in the Days of their Health and Prosperity; when they had nothing to move them but the Nature of the thing, and the great Reasonableness of receiving, and obeying, the Gospel. If, therefore, they have found that Regret, and Concern, which they have had, in the best Season,

S E R M.  
XVII.

and which had so good Ground for it, to come to nothing; to vanish into Air; and leave no good Influence, nor shew any Power, upon their Lives and Actions: upon what Accounts can they think, That Sorrow would have any better, or more lasting, Effect, were the Trial made, which for ought they know, is wholly owing to the present Fear of Death, and the near Prospect of a future Punishment; and consequently will most probably vanish, when that Fear, and that Prospect, are removed from them?

THEY will, I dare say, acknowledge no such Sorrow of a sick Bed, to be of any Effect, if they recover, and relapse to their former Sins. And how many such Instances have they seen in others? And how often have they themselves relapsed, after a better, and more reasonable, Sorrow, than this can be esteemed? And how then can they so flatter themselves, as to imagine that this last, and unproved, Sorrow is truly sincere; and would be truly effectual, were Opportunity given it to shew its Power, and display its Influences: when they have

have not one probable Argument on their side, to give Ground for such an Imagination; but great Presumptions, and much Experience, against it. So that there is no Foundation for such a Supposition: and yet, without it, there is not the least Shadow of Hope, to support them. How miserably deluded, therefore, must they be, who thus rely upon a Reed; who thus build all their Hopes, and all their Expectations of Happiness, upon that which is of a weaker nature, than what, they have experienced, to have deceived them already; who would fain escape Misery, and attain to Happiness, and yet will take none but a desperate Method, and such an one, as will too certainly disappoint and cheat them at last!

AND that they, who indulge themselves in the Habit of any sort of Sins, may be the more effectually sensible of this; I would ask them, whether they believe that Almighty God will punish any sort of Persons in another State; or whether there are any Men in this World now, who shall be condemned, at the great Day, to that miserable

SERM. XVII. State which is threatned in the Gospel. If they pretend not to believe any such thing as this; why are they in such Fears, and in so great Concern, about it? Why do the Terrors of the Lord oppress them? And why do they betray so much Uneasiness, at the Thoughts of appearing before Him? But if they do believe that thus it shall be with some sort of Persons, (as they appear to do by their Presages, and Apprehensions;) I would then ask, Who, they think, *they* are, that shall inherit most of the Anger of God in that future State. Surely, *They*, who, upon the account of their whole Lives, do most deserve it. And who are they that most deserve it? It must be either the *Wilful Sinners* of the unbelieving World; or the *Wilful Sinners*, who are professed Christians, and enjoy the Light, and Assistance, of Christ's Gospel. And which of these Two do most deserve it, is too evident to need many Words. For who can be so unreasonable as to think that *They* who sin not against so clear Light, and so evident a Divine Authority to the contrary, are in a more desperate



perate Condition, than those who are, or SERM.  
XVII.  
may be, fully acquainted with God's Will; who agree to the Reasonableness of it; who profess to fulfil it; and yet live, through their whole Lives, in express Contradiction to it? No, certainly, if our Saviour speak Truth; or if the Rule of Equity be consulted; *They shall be beaten with most Stripes, who have known their Master's Will, and have not done it*; They, who have had all fair Opportunities for Reformation, and the Practice of Virtue, and have abused them all to the Purposes of Vice.

IF, therefore, *They* shall be most miserable in another State, who have most deserved it; as without doubt they shall: tell me, I beseech you, who can deserve it more than the Christian, who hath the greatest Favours, and Obligations, bestowed upon Him; the holiest Law to govern Him; the brightest Light to direct Him; the most powerful Assistance to strengthen Him; and yet goes on to sin, against all the Obligations, and all the Engagements, and all the Motives, to the contrary, which are contained in his Profession.

SERM. fession. And consequently, unless you will  
 XVII. suppose, and maintain, that there shall be  
 ~~~~~ no such thing as Punishment in another  
 World; but that all shall equally, either
 sink into nothing, or be made happy; you
 must be persuaded of this, as of a certain
 Truth, that the wicked Christian, who con-
 tinues a wilful Sinner, under the Cloke of
 his holy Profession, is the Person, who,
 because He most of all deserves this Punish-
 ment, shall therefore most undoubtedly in-
 herit it. Nor can his Grief, when He comes
 within View of it, alter the Case: for
Grief is not Holiness, nor Virtue; nor pro-
 bably would it end in the Practice of them:
 and *these* are the Things required of Chris-
 tians, in the Time of their Health, and
 during their Conversation in this World.
 But I need not, I hope, add any more
 Words, in order to represent to you the
 Vanity and Weakness of that fatal Mistake
 of some wilful Sinners, that the Sorrow,
 which they reserve to be expressed upon
 their Death-beds, will atone for the profligate,
 and unchristian, Conduct of their
 whole past Lives.

AND

AND now, Christians, what shall we SERM.
 say to these Things? Shall not all that XVII.
 hath been urged to shew the Unreasonable-
 ness of those Hopes which are built upon
 any such Pretense, as I have now been ex-
 amining, separated from a Life of Righte-
 ousness, and true Goodness: shall it not,
 I say, move us all to lay hold on the pre-
 sent Opportunity; and to *work out our*
Salvation, whilst the Day lasts; because
the Night cometh, (the Night of Sick-
ness, and of Death,) when no Man can
work? How happy would it be for us,
 would we be induced to live as becomes
 Christians; and worthy of that holy
 Name by which we are called; and of
 that Divine Master, to whom We have
 given up our selves? This is the Thing
 required of *Us*, who have Time allowed
 us to shew the Sincerity of our *Faith* and
Profession: and this alone it is, that can
 entitle us to the Favour of God, and the
 Rewards of Heaven. If we be in earnest
 seeking after Happiness; let us not take
 the Road which leads to certain Misery:
 but that good Path which our Lord himself
 hath

SERM. hath marked out to us, both by his Exam-
 XVII. ple, and his Precepts; which will infal-
 ~~~~~libly bring us to his Heavenly Kingdom.

*Amen !*







*The Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, considered.*

## SERMON XVIII.

MATTHEW XX. I, &c.

*For the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Man that is an Householder, which went out early in the Morning to hire Labourers into his Vineyard, &c.*



IN my last Discourse, I observed SER M.  
to you that some Persons had XVIII.  
mistaken and perverted the  
*Parable* in this Chapter; vainly  
arguing, from one part of it, that the  
*last Hour*, or even the last Minute, of  
Life, may be sufficient for the Work of  
Repentance, and turning to God. In  
*that*, I only proposed one or two Con-  
siderations

SERM. derations in general: but I now design  
 XVIII. to handle this Matter more particularly;  
 ~~~~~ that it may the more clearly be seen, not  
 only that this *Parable* gives not the least
 Encouragement to any such Thought; but
 that it really proves to all, who profess
 Christianity, the absolute Necessity of Ho-
 linefs and Virtue, before the last Sicknefs,
 and Death, approach. In order to this, it
 will be necessary,

I. To lay before you an Account of the
Parable it self.

II. To shew you, what was intended to
 be signified by it.

III. To prove that there is no Founda-
 tion in it, for any such Imagination, as
 that before-mentioned: but an actual De-
 claration of the contrary.

I. As for the *Parable* it self; it sets forth
 to us an *Houfholder* going forth into the
Market-place, to hire Men to come and
 work for Him, in his *Vineyard*; that He
 met with some fooner than He did with o-
 thers; that thofe whom He hired lateft,
 came as foon as He called and invited
 them; and laboured heartily for the Time
 that

that they were in his Vineyard; and, at S E R M. the End of their Day, were by his Favour XVIII. rewarded, for that sincere and hearty, though short, Labour, with the same Reward which He had agreed to bestow upon those whom He hired much sooner. This is the Summ of the *Parable*; as far as it concerns my present Design: for it is not of Importance to relate every particular Circumstance of it. The main Matter here to be considered, is the Reward bestowed upon Those who came so late into the Vineyard.

II. I MUST therefore, now shew you what was intended by this *Parable*. And it is plain that it was designed to represent the Method of God in dispensing his Favours and Rewards to the World. *The Kingdom of Heaven*, or the Method of God's dealing with Mankind in the Revelation of his Will, and the calling of them to himself, was to be set forth in it. But, to be more particular,

1. IT is most probable, and, I believe, certain, that the main, if not the whole, Design of it, was to account for that great Stumbling-

The Parable of the Labourers

S E R M. Stumbling-block, as it was indeed, to the
 XVIII. ill-natur'd *Jews*; viz. God's calling in the
 ~~~~~ *Gentiles* to Himself, after the *Jews*; and  
 making Them equal to These, in Privileges  
 and Favours, upon their sincere Acceptance  
 of his Invitation. In the *last Verse* of the  
 preceding *Chapter*, our Lord declareth that  
*many that are first shall be last, and the last*  
*first*: that is, that, in those first called to  
 the Knowledge of God, viz. the *Jews*,  
 and those to be called after them, viz. the  
*Gentiles*, God would make no difference;  
 provided He found a sincere Disposition to  
 obey his Call, and serve Him truly. Then  
 immediately, at the *first Verse* of the 20th  
*Chapter*, our Lord goes on to illustrate  
 what He had there said; and to discover the  
 Equity of it.

I N this Sense then, of the *Parable*, Al-  
 mighty God is represented as calling Man-  
 kind at several Ages of the World: the  
*Jews*, and their Forefathers, in the first  
 Ages; and, in the *last Age*, viz. that of  
 the Gospel, as calling the *Gentile* World to  
 the Knowledge of himself; and admitting  
 them to equal Privileges with the *Jews*,  
 who



who thought themselves his peculiar People; and rewarding them after the same manner, upon their sincere Compliance with his Terms, and Acceptance of his Invitation. The *Gentile* World are represented as coming into his Gospel, upon his Call; and living worthy of it after their coming into it: and our Lord is represented, at the End of the Day of this Life, as rewarding Them, as much as the *Jews* themselves, who were called to the Knowledge of God, in a so much earlier Age.

THAT which makes it most probable that this was the true Intent of our Lord, in this *Parable*, is, that this calling of the *Gentiles* to equal Privileges with the *Jews*, was certainly a Matter which was to be opened by due Degrees, even to the best-temper'd amongst them; who were averse enough to all Thoughts of it: and likewise, that there is express mention made in it, of the murmuring of those *who were hired first*, against the Master of the House, for rewarding the *last* equally with them. For this agrees very well with the uncon-

D d

quered

S E R M. quered Prejudices of the *Jewish* Nation;  
 XVIII. and that Selfishness of Mind, by which they  
 had set themselves apart from the rest of  
 the World, and could not bear to think of  
 any who might be equal Sharers with them-  
 selves in the Favour of God, whose People  
 they had so long been. But it doth not  
 seem so well to agree with a good Chris-  
 tian's Temper; to repine, and murmur,  
 that any other sincere Persons are made as  
 happy, by the Favour of Almighty God, as  
 Himself is. It rather adds to such an one's  
 Happiness, to see others happy, than sows  
 and spoils it. But,

2. L E T us suppose that the *Parable* was  
 intended to signify to us the Method of  
 God's dealing with particular Persons, in  
 the great Affair of their Happiness, and Sal-  
 vation. And then, what is set forth in it,  
 is this, that Almighty God, doth, in his  
 Providence, call and invite some Persons  
 to the Christian Religion sooner than o-  
 thers; and that those who come latest to  
 the Knowledge of his Will, if they readily  
 lay hold on his Invitation; if they accept  
 his Offer; (nor doth the *Parable* go any  
 farther

farther than the *first* Offer; ) and comply with his Terms; and enter into his Church; and labour in it; working out their own Salvation, and producing all manner of good Fruits, during that Season of Life which is allowed them after this Call, and Invitation: that those, I say, who are thus called, and do thus behave themselves upon such Call, shall, for that hearty Sincerity, be equalled in reward, by Almighty God, to those whom they would have certainly equalled in their Labours, if they had been as soon called and invited into his Church.

III. HAVING thus laid down what was certainly, or might possibly be, intended by this *Parable*: it will be the easier to shew that there is no Foundation in it for any such Imagination, as that the late Sorrow, falsely called Repentance, of any Christian who hath been a wilful habitual Sinner through the whole Course of his Life and Health, will atone at last, for his Sins; and make him the Object of God's Favour: For,

SERM.

XVIII.


 I. IF we take the first Account now given of the meaning of this *Parable*, which is certainly the true one ; then there is nothing contained in it, but that the *Gentile* World, though called to the Knowledge of God much later than the *Jews*, yet, upon their acceptance of that Call, and their hearty application of themselves to Christian good Works, shall be accepted to equal Privileges, with the *Jews*, who had so long before them, been the peculiar People of God. This, therefore, cannot possibly bear any relation to the Case of such particular Christians, as have been long called to the Knowledge of God, and have wilfully neglected to do the Works of him that called them. No two Matters can be more distant from one another, than these two are : And, therefore, there can be no imaginable Argument drawn, from one to the other. But,

2. SUPPOSING that the *Second* Interpretation be pitch'd upon: yet, even upon this Supposition, the *Parable* sets forth all of them that are hired, as *Labourers*. The *Houſholder* went out to hire *Labourers* into his



his Vineyard: not such as professed only to labour; but such as would actually do it. So that it is to none but such, that he agrees to give any Reward. And when the Persons hired are spoken of, they are all described as truly setting themselves to labour, as soon as they are invited, and called in. All the difference is, that some are met with earlier; and some later; but as soon as they are spoken to, they all immediately leave their former Station; and apply themselves to work. There is mention indeed, of some *standing idle*: but it was in the *Market-place*; and it was only because they had met with *no body to hire them* to work. But as soon as they are hired, there is no mention of their Idleness in the Vineyard: but there they work'd, immediately, as soon as they enter'd; and continued to do so, as long as the Day lasted,

WHAT is there then for a Christian to learn from hence? Why, If this *Parable* touch his particular Case; what He must learn, is this, *viz.* that the Supreme Householder, when He calls him into his Vineyard, the Church, hires him as a *Labourer*;

SERM. and, under that Notion only, agrees with  
XVIII. Him for a Reward ; that, as soon as He is  
called to the Knowledge of the Gospel, his  
time is come for beginning to work ; that,  
as long as He lives a Professor of the Gospel,  
so long doth the *Day* last in which He  
is to work ; that, if He enter'd into this  
Religion in his young and early Days, He  
must in his young and early Days labour in  
the Works of it ; that, if He were old before  
He came to the Knowledge of it, and had  
Christianity proposed to Him, He must  
immediately lay hold on the Proposal ; He  
must heartily profess himself a Disciple of  
the Master who invites him ; He must immediately  
set himself to his Work, and continue to  
approve himself a faithful Servant to Him,  
as long as his State of Probation lasts. This  
is what this *Parable* plainly sets forth. For  
there is not one of those mention'd, who did  
not come into the Vineyard, and work in it,  
as soon as He was called ; not one, who was  
idle, unless out of necessity before He was  
hired ; not one, who continued idle afterwards,  
or did not heartily work in the Vineyard ; not  
one, who

who delayed his coming in, or used any  
pretense to avoid working, while the time  
for working lasted: And, therefore, we  
find that, their Sincerity being equal, which  
is the Ground of all, their Lord made their  
Rewards equal.

SERM.  
XVIII.  
~~~~~

IF therefore, We will apply this to the
State of particular Persons in Christ's Vine-
yard, the Church; there can be no hopes
of Reward, according to this *Parable*, but
to such as carefully and conscientiously set
themselves to work in their State of Trial;
to such as come in, when God calls them;
and make use of all their Time afterwards,
to promote his Honour, and work out their
own Salvation. The Person, who is called
last, and yet hath a Reward, is one who
hath not heard of the Gospel till Age is
come upon him; but, as soon as He doth
hear of it, embraces it; enters into the Ser-
vice of it; and shews himself, in the time
He hath to live after this, a true and sincere
Disciple of it, by the amendment and re-
formation of his Life.

HAD it been so indeed, that our Lord
had represented the *Houſholder*, as calling

D d 4

Men

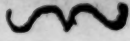
S E R M. Men into his Vineyard ; and, after they had
XVIII. enter'd into it, and professed to work, and
yet spent their time in it idly, or mischievously ; either in doing nothing, or in ruining his Interest ; as rewarding such Persons equally with those who had labour'd hard ; and this merely for their expressing a Sorrow at Night, for the wilful Faults of the whole Day : something then might have been urged ; and there might be some colour from hence, for hoping that Almighty God will at last reward Christians, who profess his Service, and enter his Vineyard as Labourers, and live useless, wicked, and profligate Lives ; merely for their sorrowful Concern for their Sins, at the end of their Day of Trial. But, as the Case is ; and as the *Parable* is expressed : what is there, I beseech you, in it, that can possibly encourage any such Hope ? Nay, what is there in it, but what forcibly shews the necessity of Christian good Works, for the Justification of all who are called into Christ's Vineyard ; whether early or late ; whether at the beginning, or towards the end, of their Days ?

W E,

WE, for our parts, generally speaking, SERM.
XVIII.
are called into God's Vineyard, at the very first Hour of the Day, at the dawning of our Lives; educated in the Christian Religion; called upon, day after day, to live worthy of that Holy Vocation wherewith we are called, and of that Profession which we make. We are not, therefore, of the Number of those who stood *Idle in the Market-place*, merely because no one would hire them; and so were but late called into the Vineyard. But we have been long ago *hired* by God himself; and invited into his Service by the promise of the most immense and unspeakable Rewards. If, therefore, we *stand Idle*; it is in his Vineyard, in which we undertook to do him Service. And if it be asked, *why stand you here all the day Idle?* We cannot have that to urge, *because no Body hath hired us*: for God Almighty is our Master; and we are his professed Servants. And we can have nothing to expect but the Punishment due to such Servants, as hypocritically pretend to serve, while they dishonour and disobey, their Master. Little will
it

SERM. it avail us to take Refuge at last in Sorrow;
 XVIII. when, at the Evening, or at Night, our
 Work is to be examined; and the Enquiry
 to be made, what we have done in that Service which we have undertaken. If we appeal to this *Parable*; that shews forth no Reward, but for such as have actually worked in the Service of their Master, from the time of their admission into the Vineyard, to the time of their being removed out of it: and this will administer but little Comfort to any, who have spent the time due to their Master, in the Service of his greatest Enemy. And the mere pretending to be his Disciple, or Servant, will be so far from lessening, that it must increase, the Guilt.

IN the *Chapter* following This which I am now considering, at the 28th Verse, our Lord proposeth the following Case to the *Jews*. *A certain Man had two Sons, and He came to the first and said, Son, go work to Day in my Vineyard. He answered and said, I will not. But afterward He repented, and went. And He came to the second, and said likewise. And He answered*

answered and said, I go, Sir, and went SERM.
not. Whether of them twain did the Will XVIII.
of his Father? They say unto Him, the 
First. He proposeth this, to let them know
that it was not the Profession of being his
Children, and his People; not the *calling*
Him, Lord, Lord, that would satisfy Al-
mighty God; but the doing his Will; and
that the professing to do it, did but aggra-
vate the Fault of not sincerely answering
that Profession. He goes on to tell them,
that those very *Harlots* and *Publicans*, who,
though before at a distance from all pre-
tenses to serve God, yet repented, and were
converted by the Preaching of *John* the
Baptist, would go into the Kingdom of
God, and be accepted to his Favour, long
before such as *They* were; who, making
great Professions of belonging to God, and
being his People, yet, were scandalously de-
ficient in performing his Will, and con-
stantly employed in provoking Him by their
Disobedience. This is the meaning of those
Words; and what follow. *Verily, I say*
unto you, that the Publicans, and the Har-
lots, go into the Kingdom of God before you.
Not

SERM. Not that any, continuing such Sinners,
XVIII. could ever arrive at Happiness : but, as it
follows, that such Sinners, repenting at the
Preaching of *John the Baptist*, and reform-
ing their Lives ; even the vile *Publicans*,
so much detested by the *Jews*, should be
vastly preferr'd before them, with all their
Professions, and all their Protestations.

THE *Vineyard*, therefore, is not a place
of Ostentation ; but of Work : not framed
to feed and support the Idle ; but to em-
ploy the Diligent : not made to adorn, and
defend, all those that enter it ; but to be
adorned, and defended, by those who pre-
tend to come into it. The very Notion of
it is, that it wants their Help, and Culti-
vation. This is what the great Master of it
expects. This is what he hires his Labour-
ers for. If, therefore, the Reward be so
great, and so certain, for all, who enter as
soon as they are invited ; and sincerely la-
bour as soon as they are enter'd : how great,
and how certain, must be the Punishment
of those who act the Reverse of this ; who
enter indeed, with a Profession of work-
ing, but basely desert the Cause, and pro-
stitute

stitute the Honour, and disregard the Com-
mands of that great Master who called and
invited them to his Service.

S E R M.
XVIII.


So that, from this *Parable* it is impossible to collect any thing to sooth professed Christians in their hopes of being accepted without a Life of Holiness and Virtue: nay, it is impossible, one would think, not to see that the very design and intent of it, supposing it to respect particular Persons, must be to shew that it is indispensably required of all, at what time soever they are called to the Knowledge of God and his Gospel, to obey that Call; and conscientiously to employ the time allowed them, after this, in the good Works which God hath marked out to them in his Law. Far be it, therefore, from any Christian, who hath long ago enter'd into God's Vineyard, to argue himself, from this part of the Gospel, into any shadow of Hope, whilst He is in a state of supine Neglect of his duty, or wilful Disobedience to God.

AND if we look into any other of those *Parables*, by which our Lord represents the Proceedings of Almighty God with his Servants;

SER M. wants ; we shall find the plainest Discourage-
 XVIII. ment to all such Hopes. When He repre-
 W presents Him as a Master, intrusting several sorts
 of Talents to several Servants, *Matth. xxv.*
14. we find that He certainly expects an
 actual Improvement of those *Talents* ; not
 only, that they should not be made use of
 against his Honour and Interest, but that
 they should not be buried, and rendred use-
 less : And accordingly, that, when one of
 those Servants appears to his Lord to have
 buried what was intrusted to Him, that He
 might be sure to restore it whole at his re-
 turn ; the Sentence is, *Cast ye the unprofi-*
table Servant into outer Darknefs : there
shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth. See
 from hence what Almighty God certainly
 expects from those who are called to his
 Knowledge, and his Service. Nor could all
 the Sorrow of that Servant, at his *Master's*
 return, atone, or compensate, for his past
 ill Conduct.

I N the 21st Chapter God is represented
 as *letting out his Vineyard to Husbandmen,*
 who abused his Mercy ; and, at last, as *de-*
stroying them, and letting out his Vineyard

to

to others who should render him the Fruits S E R M.
in their Seasons. In another Parable, chap. XVIII.
xviii. at the end, He is represented, as de-
livering over to the Tormentors, a Servant,
only for being unmerciful, and implacable,
towards his Fellow-Servant. Doth all this
look, as if he would accept of any thing,
at last, at the Hands of those who are called
into his Service, instead of an hearty and
sincere Obedience ; or, as if He did not
lay a Duty, an indispensable Duty, upon
them : the Duty of reforming whatever is
amiss in themselves ; and of flourishing in
all those good Fruits, and good Works,
which are well-pleasing in his Eyes ?

AND thus have I done what I designed :
And, as I hope, have, in this, and several
other Discourses, effectually shewn the great
Weakness, and Folly, of a Christian's rely-
ing upon any thing for Salvation, but the
actual Reformation, and Amendment, of
what he knows to be sinful in himself.

I CAN at present think but of one thing
more that remains to be touched upon, be-
fore we leave this Subject. There are some
Christians, I am sensible, who are truly
convinced

SERM. convinced that this is a just Account of the
 XVIII. Matter ; that their only Hopes must be in
 ~~~~~ the actual amendment of their Lives, and  
 practice of Virtue, whilst God gives them  
 opportunity ; and that all other Hopes are  
 vain and deluding : and are therefore resolu-  
 ved to reform what is bad in themselves.  
 But then, they deferr this great Work ; they  
 are unwilling to do it immediately : but  
 hope that what they design may be as well  
 performed some time hereafter. They place  
 not their Hopes in any thing but Amend-  
 ment : but they put off this Amendment till  
 another Season. A few Considerations will  
 shew us the extreme Hazard, and Folly, of  
 such a Proceeding. For,

I. SUPPOSING that they are taken a-  
 way before they have put this Resolution  
 into effect ; they are, by their own Con-  
 fession, in a most deplorable, inexcusable,  
 Condition : being removed from hence, in  
 a State, which they themselves account to  
 be a State condemned by God in his Gospel.  
 It is the Amendment of their Lives which,  
 they know, He requires ; and the resoluti-  
 on of Amendment, is not Amendment.

Nay,



Nay, indeed, it will be so far from helping them, upon this Supposition; that it will aggravate their Guilt and their Punishment, that they have not actually done what they knew to be their indispensable Duty to do. And who knows when his last Hour may come? Is this State, a State of Certainty, and Duration? *In the midst of Life, are we not in Death?* Do we not see, every day, Persons as likely, nay, more likely than ourselves, to continue here, called to give account of their Lives? What is it then we can hope for? or how can we think it consistent with the lowest Degree of Prudence, to delay that which we know not whether we can ever have an opportunity to perform, unless we lay hold on the present? But,

2. WHAT is it that can induce Men to delay this great, and necessary Work? Is it the difficulty of it at present? Alas! *that* will be so far from being diminished, that it will be increased, by time. Every Step we take, in most of the Vices, renders the attempt of Reformation so much the more difficult. As we grow old, evil

E e

Habits

SERM.  
XVIII.



Habits grow old upon us. Custom becomes like Nature it self ; not to be put off, or broken through, but with a difficulty which we become willing at last to think insuperable. This made the *Prophet* cry out, *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then shall ye also, that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well.* He thought it such a difficulty, as, in the figurative Style, might be represented by Matters utterly impossible. Certainly, to delay an important Matter ; a Business necessary to be performed, because it is difficult ; when every Moment, that it is delayed, will add to the difficulty of it ; is to put it more out of our Power than it is at present : It is to render our Work more difficult, because it is difficult already ; which is the most inexcusable Weakness.

OR, Is it that Men hope that Time, and Years, will naturally wear out their Inclinations to Sin ; and that then they shall find it a much more easy Matter to live as they ought ? Alas ! Time, and Years, bring an inclination to some Vices along with them,  
against

against which we shall find enough to do to guard our selves ; and present us with Evils, under which alone we shall have enough to do to support our selves : and to some former Vices they add a Strength, and Force, which they had not before. Nay, What one ill Temper, or bad Inclination, or Passion, is ever known to be removed, or totally cured, by Years ; after an Indulgence hath been given to it through the former Course of Life ? It is the Mind, that is the Seat of Vice : and if *that* remain corrupt and vitiated, the Man is still corrupt and vicious in the Eyes of God ; how much soever his outward Appearance may be altered in other respects.

BUT could it be so, that Age and Years would certainly remove all that Viciousness, which Custom had been breeding : yet how little likelihood, as I observed before, is there of arriving at such a Term of Years ? And how much more likelihood is there of the contrary ? And if we should ; and that should be the Case : yet how would all the Beauty and Reward of Virtue be gone ? What a Return would it be to Almighty

**SERM.** God, for all his Long-suffering, to present  
**XVIII.** him at last with a Heart dead to all the Pur-  
 poses of Life ; render'd useless, and insignificant by old Age ? What an Affront to Him, to have spent all the best part of Life in the Service of his Enemy ; and then to come and offer Him a Service that hath nothing in it : or, to profess to serve Him, when we are past the time in which it can be acceptable to Him ? Is it Virtue, for Creatures in a State of Probation, to leave off Vices, which they cannot retain ? to forsake Customs, which they cannot follow ? To pretend to relinquish Habits, which have relinquish'd them ? For, in truth, this is the Case, upon the present Supposition. They design to serve God with the Dregs of Life ; They leave not their Vices, but their Vices leave them ; They abandon not their Sins, but their Sins have abandoned them.

**TRY,** therefore, how such an Offer, and such a Dedication of your selves to God, after a multitude of Years spent in the hearty Service of his Adversary, will sound. Suppose your selves in his Presence, addressing to Him in this manner.

“ Lord !



" Lord! We have indeed spent the Vigour  
" of our whole Life, in the Service of Sin;  
" in dishonouring Thee; and in neglecting  
" thy Religion. The time is now come,  
" when we can sin no longer, when our  
" Vices have abandoned us; and Human So-  
" ciety hath as it were excluded us. Behold!  
" now, that we cannot well do any thing else,  
" we offer to Thee our Services, which are  
" without Vigour or Force; and present to  
" Thee the Dregs of Life, and the Refuse of  
" all our Years." This is what every Man  
must in effect say, that puts off his Amend-  
ment till Old-age; upon supposition that He  
shall arrive at it; and that then He shall be a-  
ble, and willing, to sin no longer. And if  
there cannot be a greater Affront imagined,  
than such an Offer; and if it be the greatest  
Shame even to think of such a Return to  
God as this: let not any Consideration in  
the World move any of us to defer so in-  
dispensable a Duty to a time so improper,  
and so utterly unfit for it.

S E R M.

XVIII.

See Arch-  
bishop  
Tillotson's  
Sermon  
concerning  
the Ad-  
vantages  
of Early  
Piety.

LET us consider what hath been said;  
that our Days are uncertain; and, there-  
fore, that 'tis Madness to put off, even for

ORE

SERM. one Day, that Work which is certainly necessary; that if we should have more time allowed us, yet our Business of Amendment would grow more and more difficult every Day; that the present time is that in which it is most easy, and most likely, to be effected; and that if we could suppose any such time to be coming to us in this State, in which our Vices will forsake us whether we will or no, we must not expect that this shall be accounted our Virtue, and reckoned to us for Reward, any more than our ceasing to sin, when we are laid in our Graves: or that God will accept the Present of our Service, when all our past Health and Life have been wilfully spent in the Prosecution of our Lusts; and we now offer it to Him, because we know not what else to do with it.

W H A T remains, therefore, but that we immediately set about that Work, which cannot be too soon begun; nor too soon finished? A Work so necessary, that it is impossible to be happy without it? that nothing delude us into a Delay, in a Case in which the least Delay may be our Ruine?

That

That no Pretense, of what sort soever, di- S E R M.  
vert us from the entring into the Paths of XVIII.  
that Holiness, *without which no Man shall* ~~~~~  
*see the Lord?* Nothing but this can give  
us Peace of Conscience here: nothing but  
this can assure us of the least Degree of  
Happiness hereafter. And God grant that  
this may be the Effect of what hath been  
said; for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord! *To*  
*whom, with the Father, and holy Spirit, be*  
*all Glory now, and for evermore. Amen!*

F I N I S.



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